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Hannah Arendt

HISTORY AND IMMORTALITY

The modern concept of process pervading history and nature alike separates the modern age from the past more profoundly than any other single idea. To our modern way of thinking nothing is meaningful in and by itself, not history nor nature taken as a whole, and certainly not particular occurrences in the physical order or specific historical events. There is a fateful enormity to this state of affairs. Invisible processes have engulfed every tangible thing, every individual entity that is visible to us, degrading them into functions of an over-all process. The enormity of this change is likely to escape us if we allow ourselves to be misled by such generalities as the disenchantment of the world or the alienation of man, generalities that often involve a romanticized notion of the past. What the concept of process implies is that the concrete and the general, the single thing or event and the universal meaning have parted company. The process, which alone makes meaningful all that it comprises, has thus acquired a monopoly of universality and significance.

Certainly nothing more sharply distinguishes the modern concept of history from that of antiquity. For this distinction does not hinge on whether or not antiquity had a concept of world history or an idea of mankind as a whole. What is much more relevant is that Greek and Roman historiography, much as they differ from each other, both take it for granted that the meaning or, as the Romans would say, the lesson of each event, deed, or occurrence is revealed in and by itself. This, to be sure, does not exclude either causality or the context in which something occurs; antiquity is as aware of these as we are. But causality and context are seen in a light provided by the event itself, illuminating a specific segment of human affairs; they are not envisaged as having an independent existence of which the event would only be the more or less accidental though adequate expression. Everything that was done or happened con-

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tained and disclosed its share of "general" meaning within the confines of its individual shape, and did not need a developing and engulfing process to become significant. Herodotus wanted "to say what is" (*legein ta eonta*) because saying and writing stabilizes the futile and perishable; yet he never would have doubted that each thing that is or was carries its meaning within itself and needs only the word to make it manifest (*logois deloun,* "to make manifest through words"). The flux of his narrative is sufficiently loose to leave room for many stories, but there is nothing in this flux indicative that the general bestows meaning and significance on the particular.

For this shift of emphasis it is immaterial whether Greek poetry and historiography saw the meaning of the event in some surpassing greatness justifying its remembrance by posterity, or whether the Romans conceived of history as a storehouse of examples taken from actual political behavior, demonstrating what tradition, the authority of ancestors, demanded from each generation and what the past had accumulated for the benefit of the present. Our notion of historical process overrules both concepts, bestowing upon mere time-sequence an importance and dignity it never had before.

Because of this modern emphasis upon time and time-sequence, it has often been maintained that the origin of our historical consciousness lies in the Hebrew-Christian tradition, with its rectilinear time-concept and its idea of a divine providence giving to the whole of man's historical time the unity of a plan of salvation—an idea which indeed stands as much in contrast to the insistence on individual events and occurrences of classical antiquity as to the cyclical time-speculations of late antiquity. A great deal of evidence has been cited in support of the thesis that the modern historical consciousness has a Christian religious origin and came into being through a secularization of originally theological categories. Only our religious tradition, it is said, knows of a beginning and, in the Christian version, an end of the world; if human life on earth follows a divine plan of salvation, then its mere sequence must harbor a significance independent of and transcending all single occurrences. Therefore, the argument runs, a "well-defined outline of world history" did not appear prior to Christianity and the first philosophy of history is presented in Augustine's *Civitate Dei.* And it is true that in Augustine we find the notion that History itself, namely that which has meaning and makes sense, can be separated from the single historical

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events related in chronological narrative. He states explicitly (in *De doctrina Christiana,* 2, 28, 44) that "although the past institutions of men are related in historical narrative, history itself is not to be counted among human institutions."

This similarity between the Christian and the modern concept of history is deceptive, however. It rests on a comparison with the cyclical history-speculations of late antiquity and overlooks the classical history-concepts of Greece and Rome. The comparison is supported by the fact that Augustine himself, when he refuted pagan time-speculations, was primarily concerned with the cyclical time-theories of his own era which, indeed, no Christian could accept because of the absolute uniqueness of Christ's life and death on earth: "Once Christ died for our sins; and rising from the dead, he dieth no more," Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* (XII 13). What modern interpreters are liable to forget is that Augustine claimed this uniqueness of event, which sounds so familiar to our ears, for this one event only—the supreme event in human history, when eternity, as it were, broke into the course of earthly mortality; he never claimed such uniqueness, as we do, for ordinary secular events. The simple fact that the problem of history arose in Christian thought only with Augustine should make us doubt its Christian origin, and this all the more as it arose, in terms of Augustine's own philosophy and theology, because of an accident. The fall of Rome, occurring in his lifetime, was interpreted by Christians and pagans alike as a decisive event, and it was to the refutation of this belief that Augustine devoted thirteen years of his life. The point, as he saw it, was that no purely secular event could or should ever be of central import to man. His lack of interest in what we call history was so great that he devoted only one book of the *Civitate Dei* to secular events; and in commissioning his friend and pupil, Orosius, to write a "world history" he had no more in mind than a "true compilation of the evils of the world."[1]

1 See Theodor Mommsen, "St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress," in *Journal of the History of Ideas,* June 1951. A close reading shows a striking discrepancy between the content of this excellent article and the thesis expressed in its title. The best defense of the Christian origin of the concept of history is found in Ch.N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture.* He holds that ancient historiography came to an end because it had failed to establish "a principle of historical intelligibility" and that Augustine solved this problem by substituting "the *logos* of Christ for that of classicism as a principle of understanding."

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Augustine's attitude toward secular history is essentially no different from that of the Romans, albeit the emphasis is inverted: history remains a storehouse of examples and the location of events in time within the secular course of history remains without importance. Secular history repeats itself, and the only story in which unique and unrepeatable events take place ends with the birth and death of Christ. Thereafter secular powers rise and fall as in the past and will rise and fall until the world's end, but no fundamentally new truth will ever again be revealed. In all truly Christian philosophy man is a "pilgrim on earth" and this fact alone separates it from our own historical consciousness. To the Christian, as to the Roman, the significance of secular events lay in their having the character of examples likely to repeat themselves, so that action could follow certain standardized patterns. (This, incidentally, is also very far removed from the Greek notion of the heroic deed, related by poets and historians, which serves as a kind of yardstick measuring one's own capacities for greatness. The difference between the faithful following of a recognized example and the attempt to measure oneself against it is the difference between Roman-Christian morality and what has been called the Greek agonal spirit, which did not know any "moral" considerations but only an *aei aristeuein,* an unceasing effort always to be the best of all.) For us, on the other hand, history stands and falls on the assumption that the process in its very secularity tells a story of its own and that, strictly speaking, repetitions cannot occur.

Even more alien to the modern concept of history is the Christian notion that mankind has a beginning and an end, that the world was created in time and will ultimately perish like all things temporal. Historical consciousness did not arise when the creation of the world was taken as the starting point for chronological enumeration, by the Jews in the Middle Ages; nor did it arise in the sixth century when Dionysus Exiguus began counting time from the birth of Christ. We know of similar schemes of chronology in Oriental civilization, and the Christian chronology imitated the Roman practice of counting time from the year of the foundation of Rome. In stark contrast stands the modern calendar, introduced only at the end of the eighteenth century, that takes the birth of Christ as a turning point from which to count time both backward and forward.

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This chronological reform is presented in the textbooks as a mere technical improvement, needed for scholarly purposes to facilitate the exact fixing of dates in ancient history without referring to a maze of different time-reckonings. In more recent times, Hegel inspired an interpretation which sees in the modern calendar a truly Christian chronology because the birth of Christ now seems to have become the turning point of world history. (See for example, the interesting book *Christ and Time,* by Oscar Cullmann.)

Neither of these explanations is satisfactory. Calendar reforms for scholarly purposes have occurred many times in the past without being accepted in everyday life, precisely because they were invented for scholarly convenience only, and did not correspond to any changed time-concept in society at large. The decisive thing in our calendar is not that the birth of Christ now appears as the turning point of world history, for it had been recognized as such and with greater force many centuries before without any similar effect upon our chronology, but rather that now for the first time the history of mankind reaches back into an infinite past to which we can add at will and into which we can inquire further as it stretches ahead into an infinite future. This twofold infinity of past and future eliminates all notions of beginning and end, establishing mankind in a potential earthly immortality. What at first glance looks like a Christianization of world history in fact eliminates all religious time-speculations from secular history. So far as secular history is concerned we live in a process which knows no beginning and no end and which thus does not permit us to entertain eschatological expectations. Nothing could be more alien to Christian thought than this concept of an earthly immortality of mankind.

The great impact of the notion of history upon the consciousness of the modern age came relatively late, not before the last third of the eighteenth century, finding with relative quickness its climactic consummation in Hegel's philosophy. The central concept of Hegelian metaphysics is history. This alone places it in the sharpest possible opposition to all previous metaphysics, which, since Plato, had looked for truth and the revelation of eternal Being everywhere except in the realm of human affairs—*ta tôn anthrôpôn pragmata*—of which Plato speaks with such contempt precisely because no per-

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manence can be found in it and therefore it cannot be expected to disclose truth. To think, with Hegel, that truth resides and reveals itself in the time-process itself is characteristic of all modern historical consciousness, however it expresses itself, in specifically Hegelian terms or not. The rise of the humanities in the nineteenth century was inspired by the same feeling for history and is hence clearly distinguished from the recurrent revivals of antiquity that took place in previous periods. Men now began to read, as Meinecke pointed out in *Die Entstehung des Historismus,* as nobody had ever read before. They "read in order to force from history the ultimate truth it could offer to God-seeking people"; but this ultimate truth was no longer supposed to reside in a single book, whether the Bible or some substitute for it. History itself was considered such a book, the book "of the human soul in times and nations," as Herder defined it.

Recent historical research has shed much new light on the transitional period between the Middle Ages and modern times, with the result that the modern age, previously assumed to have begun with the Renaissance, has been traced back into the very essence of the medieval spirit. This greater insistence on an unbroken continuity, valuable though it is, has one drawback, that by trying to bridge the gulf separating a religious culture from the secular world we live in, it bypasses, rather than solves, the great riddle of the sudden undeniable rise of the secular. If by "secularization" one means no more than the rise of the secular and the concomitant eclipse of a transcendent world, then it is undeniable that modern historical consciousness is very intimately connected with it. This, however, in no way points to the doubtful transformation of religious and transcendent categories into immanent earthly aims and standards on which the historians of ideas have recently insisted. Secularization means first of all simply the separation of religion and politics, and this affected both sides so fundamentally that nothing is less likely to have taken place than the gradual transformation of religious categories into secular concepts which the defenders of unbroken continuity try to establish. The reason they can succeed to some extent in convincing us lies in the nature of ideas in general rather than in the period with which they deal; the moment one separates an idea entirely from its basis in real experience, it is not

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difficult to establish a connection between it and almost any other idea. In other words, if we assume that something like an independent realm of pure ideas exists, all notions and concepts cannot but be interrelated, because then they all owe their origin to the same source: the human mind in its extreme subjectivity, unaffected by experience and with no relationship to the world, whether the world is conceived as Nature or as History.

However, the point is not whether Hegel's "cunning of reason" was a secularization of divine providence or whether Marx's classless society represents a secularization of the Messianic Age, but rather that the separation of Church and State eliminated religion from public life, removing all religious sanctions from politics and causing religion to lose that political element it had acquired in the centuries when the Catholic Church acted as the heir of the Roman Empire. (It does not follow that this separation converted religion into an entirely "private affair." This type of privacy in religion comes about when a tyrannical regime prohibits the public functioning of churches, denying the believer the public space in which he can appear with others and be seen by them. The public-secular domain, or the political sphere, properly speaking, comprehends and has room for the public-religious sphere. A believer can be a member of a church and at the same time act as a citizen in the larger unit constituted by all belonging to the City.) This change was frequently brought about by men who did not doubt in the least the truth of traditional religious teaching (even Hobbes died in mortal fear of "hell-fire" and Descartes prayed to the Holy Virgin) and nothing in the sources justifies us in considering all those who established anew an independent secular sphere as secret or unconscious atheists. All that we can say is that whatever their faith or lack of it, it was without influence on the secular. Thus the political theorists of the seventeenth century accomplished secularization by separating political thinking from theology, and by insisting that the rules of natural law provided a basis for the body politic even if God did not exist. As Grotius put it, "even God cannot cause two times two not to make four." This necessarily attributes to the secular an independent, immanent meaning.

It has been pointed out before that the most important consequence of the rise of the secular realm in the modern age was that

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belief in individual immortality—whether it be the immortality of the soul or, more importantly, the resurrection of the body—lost its politically binding force. Now indeed "it was inevitable that earthly posterity should once again become the principal substance of hope," but it does not follow from this that, as John Baillie maintains in *The Belief in Progress,* this new attitude was "essentially a redisposition of the Christian ideas which it seeks to displace." What actually happened is that the problem of politics regained that grave and decisive relevance for the existence of men which it had been lacking since antiquity because it was irreconcilable with a strictly Christian understanding of the secular. For Greeks and Romans alike, all differences notwithstanding, the foundation of a body politic was brought about by man's need to overcome the mortality of human life and the futility of human deeds. Outside the body politic, man's life was not only and not even primarily insecure, i.e., exposed to the violence of others; it was without meaning and dignity because under no circumstances could it leave any traces behind it. That was the reason for the curse laid by Greek thinking on the whole sphere of private life, the "idiocy" of which consisted in its being concerned solely with survival, just as it was the reason for Cicero's contention that only through building and preserving political communities could human virtue attain to the ways of the gods. In other words, the secularization of the modern age once more brought to the fore that activity which Aristotle had called *athanatidzein,* a term for which we have no ready equivalent in our living languages. It can mean, as it certainly did in early Greece, the immortalization of oneself through famous deeds and the acquisition of immortal fame; it can also mean the addition to the human artifice of something more permanent than we are ourselves; and it can mean, as it did with the philosophers, the spending of one's life with things immortal. In any event, what the activity required was an imperishable space guaranteeing that "immortalizing" would not be in vain.

To us, who have been accustomed to the idea of immortality only through the lasting appeal of works of art and perhaps through the relative permanence we ascribe to all great civilizations, it may appear implausible that the drive toward immortality should lie at the foundation of political communities. To the Greeks, however, the latter might very well have been much more taken for granted

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than the former. Did not Pericles think as Thucydides (II 41) tells us, that the highest praise he could bestow upon Athens was to claim that it no longer needed "a Homer or others of his craft," but that thanks to the *polis* Athenians everywhere would leave "imperishable monuments" behind them? What Homer had done was to immortalize human deeds, and the *polis* could dispense with the service of "others of his craft" because it offered each of its citizens that public-political space that it assumed would confer immortality upon his acts. The growing *a-politia* of the philosophers after Socrates' death, their demand to be freed from political activities and their insistence on performing a nonpractical, purely theoretical *athanatidzein* outside the sphere of political life had philosophical as well as political causes, but among the political ones was certainly the increasing decay of *polis* life, making even the permanence, let alone immortality, of this particular body politic more and more doubtful.

The *a-politia* of ancient philosophy foreshadowed the much more radical anti-political attitude of early Christianity which, however, in its very extremism survived only so long as the Roman Empire provided a stable body politic for all nations and all religions. During these early centuries of our era, the conviction that things earthly are perishable remained a religious matter and was the belief of those who wanted to have nothing to do with political affairs. This changed decisively with the crucial experience of the fall of Rome, the sacking of the Eternal City, after which no age ever again believed that any human product, least of all a political structure, could endure forever. As far as Christian thought was concerned, this was a mere reaffirmation of their beliefs. It was of no great relevance, as Augustine pointed out. To Christians only individual men were immortal, but nothing else of this world, neither mankind as a whole nor the earth itself, least of all the human artifice. Only by transcending this world could immortalizing activities be performed, and the only institution that could be justified within the secular realm was the Church, the *Civitas Dei* on earth, to which had fallen the burden of political responsibility and into which all genuinely political impulses could be drawn. That this transformation of Christianity and its earlier anti-political impulses into a great and stable political institution was possible at all without complete perversion of the Gospel is almost wholly due to Augustine, who,

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though hardly the father of our concept of history, is probably the spiritual author and certainly the greatest theorist of Christian politics. What was decisive—apart from the fact that he was still firmly rooted in the Roman tradition—was that in his *Civitas Dei* he conceived of a hereafter in which men would continue to live in a community. Thus the fact of the plurality of men, one of the fundamental prerequisites of political life, bound human "nature" even under the conditions of individual immortality, and was not among the characteristics which this "nature" had acquired after Adam's fall and which made politics in the mere secular sense a necessity for the sinful life on earth. Augustine's conviction that some kind of political life must exist even under conditions of sinlessness and, indeed, sanctity, he summed up in one sentence: *Socialis est vita sanctorum,* even the life of the saints is a life together with other men (*Civ. Dei,* XIX 5).

If the insight into the perishability of all human creations had no great relevance for Christian thought and could even in its greatest thinker be in accord with a conception of politics beyond the secular realm, it became very troublesome in the modern age when the secular sphere of human life had emancipated itself from religion. The separation of religion and politics meant that no matter what an individual might believe as a member of a church, as a citizen he acted and behaved on the assumption of human mortality. Hobbes' fear of hell-fire did not influence in the least his construction of the *Leviathan* as a mortal god to overawe all men. Politically speaking, within the secular realm itself secularization meant nothing more or less than that men once more had become mortals. If this led them to a rediscovery of antiquity, which we call humanism, and in which Greek and Roman sources spoke again a much more familiar language corresponding to experiences much more similar to their own, it certainly did not allow them in practice to mold their behavior in accordance with either the Greek or the Roman example. The ancient trust in the world's being more permanent than individual men and in political structures as a guarantee of earthly survival after death did not return, so that the ancient opposition of a mortal life to a more or less immortal world failed them. Now, both life and world had become perishable, mortal, and futile.

Today we find it difficult to grasp that this situation of ab-

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solute mortality could be unbearable to men. However, looking back upon the development of the modern age up to the beginning of our own, the modern world, we see that centuries passed before we became accustomed to the notion of absolute mortality, so that the thought of it no longer bothers us and the old alternative between an individual immortal life in a mortal world and a mortal life in an immortal world has ceased to be meaningful. In this respect, however, as in many others, we differ from all previous ages. Our concept of history, though essentially a concept of the modern age, owes its existence to that transition period when religious confidence in immortal life had lost its influence upon the secular and the new indifference toward the question of immortality had not yet been born.

If we leave aside the new indifference and stay within the limits of the traditional alternative bestowing immortality either upon life or upon the world, then it is obvious that *athanatidzein,* immortalizing, as an activity of mortal men can be meaningful only if there is no guarantee of life in the hereafter. At that moment, however, it becomes almost a necessity as long as there is any concern with immortality whatsoever. It was therefore in the course of its search for a strictly secular realm of enduring permanence that the modern age discovered the potential immortality of mankind. This is what is manifestly expressed in our calendar; it is the actual content of our concept of history. History, stretching into the twofold infinity of past and future, can guarantee immortality on earth in much the same way as the Greek *polis* or the Roman republic had guaranteed that human life and human deeds, insofar as they disclosed something essential and something great, would receive a strictly human and earthly permanence in this world. The great advantage of this concept has been that the twofold infinity of the historical process makes the very notion of an end virtually inconceivable, whereas its great disadvantage, compared with ancient political theory, seems to be that permanence is entrusted to a flowing process, as distinguished from a stable structure. At the same time the immortalizing process has become independent of cities, states, and nations; it encompasses the whole of mankind whose history Hegel was consequently able to see as one uninterrupted development of the Spirit. Mankind ceases to be only a species of nature and what distinguishes man from the

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animals is no longer merely that he has speech (*logon echon*), as in the Aristotelian definition, or that he has reason, as in the medieval definition (*animal rationale*): his very life now distinguishes him, the one thing that in the traditional definition he was supposed to share with the animals. In the words of Droysen, who was perhaps the most thoughtful of the nineteenth-century historians: "What their species is for animals and plants . . . that is history for human beings."[2]

While it is obvious that our historical consciousness would never have been possible without the rise of the secular realm to a new dignity, it was not so obvious that the historical process would eventually be called upon to bestow the necessary new meaning and significance upon men's deeds and sufferings on earth. And indeed, at the beginning of the modern age everything pointed to an elevation of political action and political life, and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so rich in new political philosophies, were still quite unaware of any special emphasis on history as such. Their concern, on the contrary, was to get rid of the past rather than to rehabilitate the historical process. The distinguishing trait of Hobbes' philosophy is his singleminded insistence on the future and the resulting teleological interpretation of thought as well as of action. The conviction of the modern age that man can know only that which he himself has made seems to be in accordance with a glorification of action rather than with the basically contemplative attitude of the historian and of historical consciousness in general. (Thus one of the reasons for Hobbes' break with traditional philosophy was that while all previous metaphysics had followed Aristotle in holding that the *archai*—the inquiry into the first causes of everything that is—comprises the chief task of philosophy, it was Hobbes' contention that, on the contrary, the task of philosophy was to guide purposes and aims and to establish a reasonable teleology of action. So important was this point to Hobbes that he insisted that animals too are capable of discovering causes and that therefore this cannot be

2 Joh. Gustav Droysen, *Historik* (1882), paragr. 82: "*Was den Tieren, den Pflanzen ihr Gattungsbegriff—denn die Gattung ist, hina tou aei kai tou theiou metechôsin—das ist den Menschen die Geschichte.*" The Greek quotation is probably from Aristotle.

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the true distinction between human and animal life; he found the distinction instead in the ability to reckon with "the effects of some present or past cause . . . of which I have not at any time seen any sign but in man only." (*Leviathan,* Book I, ch. 3.)) The modern age not only produced at its very start a new and radical political philosophy—Hobbes is only one example though perhaps the most interesting—it also produced for the first time philosophers willing to orient themselves according to the requirements of the political realm; and this new political orientation is not only present in Hobbes, but *mutatis mutandis,* in Locke and Hume as well. It can be said that Hegel's transformation of metaphysics into a philosophy of history was preceded by an attempt to get rid of metaphysics for the sake of a philosophy of politics.

In any consideration of the modern concept of history one of the crucial problems is to explain its sudden rise during the last third of the eighteenth century and the concomitant decrease of interest in purely political thinking. (Vico must be said to be a forerunner whose influence was not felt until more than two generations after his death.) Where a genuine interest in political theory still survived it ended in despair, as in Tocqueville, or in the confusion of politics with history, as in Marx. For what else but despair could have inspired Tocqueville's assertion that "since the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future the mind of man wanders in obscurity"? This is actually the conclusion of the great work (*Democracy in America*) in which he had "delineated the society of the modern world" and in the introduction to which he had proclaimed that "a new science of politics is needed for a new world." And what else but confusion—a merciful confusion for Marx himself and a fatal one for his followers—could have led to Marx's identification of action with "the making of history"?

Marx's notion of "making history" had an influence far beyond the circle of convinced Marxists or determined revolutionaries. Although it is closely connected with Vico's idea that history was made by man, as distinguished from "nature" which was made by God, the difference between them is still decisive. For Vico, as later for Hegel, the importance of the concept of history was primarily theoretical. It never occurred to either of them to apply this concept directly by using it as a principle of action. Truth they conceived of as being revealed to the contemplative, backward-directed glance

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of the historian who, by being able to see the process as a whole, is in a position to overlook the "narrow aims" of acting men, concentrating instead on the "higher aims" that realize themselves behind these men's backs (Vico). Marx, on the other hand, combined this notion of history with the teleological political philosophy of the earlier stages of the modern age, so that in his thought the "higher aims" become the intended ends of political action. Thus the historian was politicalized. Here the age-old identification of action with making is supplemented and perfected, as it were, through identifying the contemplative gaze of the historian with the contemplation of the model (the *eidos* and the *idea*) guiding the craftsman and preceding all making. And the danger of this philosophy does not lie in making immanent what was formerly transcendent, as is often alleged, by transforming "higher aims" into willed intentions, and in the attempt to establish a paradise on earth. The danger is rather the transformation of meanings into ends, which is what happens in Marx's philosophy when he takes the Hegelian meaning of all history—the progressive development and realization of the idea of Freedom—to be an end of human action; he then, in accordance with tradition, views this as the end-product of a manufacturing process, just as the table is clearly the end-product of the carpenter's activity.

The growing meaninglessness of the modern world is perhaps nowhere more clearly indicated than by this identification of meaning and end. It is as though the carpenter, stricken suddenly blind to the distinction between "for the sake of . . ." and "in order to . . .," forgot that only his particular acts in making a table are performed "in order to" produce the table, but that his whole life as a carpenter is ruled by something quite different, namely, an encompassing notion "for the sake of" which he became a carpenter in the first place, a notion such as being a useful member of society or becoming a good craftsman or even making a living. The moment he begins to pursue this meaning in the same way he pursues an end, begins to make a living in the same way he makes a table, his products, instead of being ends in themselves, become means to an ulterior purpose and are likely to become as inferior as books by writers who write in order "to be a writer" or to make money, and not in order to produce a particular book. In other words, the mo-

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ment a meaning is conceived and pursued as an end, all ends inevitably turn and are degraded into means.

This example, meant to illustrate the identification of ends and meaning, is certainly wholly inadequate to Marx's philosophy of history. We chose it nevertheless because it shows the peculiar neglect of the particular, which is the inevitable consequence of the apparent elevation of an end to the higher level of meaning. In this version of historical consciousness, which is by no means restricted to Marx in particular or even to pragmatism in general, one tries once more to escape the frustration and fragility of human action by construing it in the image of making. What distinguishes Marx's own theory from all others in which the notion of "making history" has found a place, is only that he alone realized that if one takes history to be the object of a process of fabrication or making, there must come a moment when this "object" is completed, and that if one imagines that one can "make history," one cannot escape the consequence that there will be an end to history. Whenever we hear of grandiose aims in politics, such as establishing a new society in which justice will be guaranteed forever, or fighting a war to end all wars or to make the whole world safe for democracy, we are moving in the realm of this kind of thinking.

In this context, it is important to see that here the process of history, as it shows itself in our calendar's stretching into the infinity of the past and the future, has been abandoned for the sake of an altogether different kind of process, that of making something which has a beginning as well as an end. This process, however, is incapable of guaranteeing men any kind of immortality because its end cancels out and makes unimportant whatever went before: in the classless society the best mankind can do with history is to forget the whole unhappy affair, whose only purpose was to abolish itself. It cannot bestow meaning on particular occurrences either, because it has dissolved all of the particular into means whose meaningfulness ends the moment the end-product is finished: single events and deeds and sufferings have no more meaning here than hammer and nails have with respect to the finished table.

We know the curious ultimate meaninglessness arising from all the strictly utilitarian philosophies that were so common and so characteristic of the earlier industrial phase of the modern age, when

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men, fascinated by the new possibilities of manufacturing, thought of everything in terms of means and ends, i.e., categories whose validity has its source and justification in the experience of producing use-objects. The trouble lies in the nature of the categorical framework of ends and means which changes every attained end immediately into the means to a new end, thereby, as it were, destroying meaning wherever it is applied, until in the midst of the seemingly unending utilitarian questioning: What is the use of . . .?, in the midst of the seemingly unending progress where the aim of today becomes the means of a better tomorrow, the one question arises which no utilitarian thinking can ever answer: "And what is the use of use?" as Lessing once succinctly put it.

This meaninglessness of all truly utilitarian philosophies could escape Marx's awareness because he thought that after Hegel in his dialectics had discovered the law of all movements, natural and historical, he himself had found the spring and content of this law in the historical realm and thereby the concrete meaning of the story history has to tell. Class struggle—to Marx this formula seemed to unlock all the secrets of history, just as the law of gravity had appeared to unlock all the secrets of nature. Today, after being treated to one such history-construction after another, to one such formula after another, the question for us is no longer whether this or that particular formula is correct. In all such attempts what is considered to be a meaning is in fact no more than a pattern, and within the limitations of utilitarian thought, nothing but patterns can make sense because only patterns can be "made" whereas meanings cannot be, but, like truth, will only disclose or reveal themselves. Marx was only the first—but still the greatest, among historians—to mistake a pattern for a meaning, and he certainly could hardly have been expected to realize that there was almost no pattern into which the events of the past would not have fitted as neatly and consistently as they did into his own. Marx's pattern at least was based on one important historical insight; since then we have seen historians freely imposing upon the maze of past facts almost any pattern they wish, with the result that the ruin of the factual and particular through the seemingly higher validity of general "meanings" has even undermined the basic factual structure of all historical process, that is, chronology.

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Moreover, Marx construed his pattern as he did because of his concern with action and impatience with history. He is the last of those thinkers who stand at the borderline between the modern age's earlier interest in politics and its later preoccupation with history-consciousness. One might mark the point where the modern age abandoned its earlier attempts to establish a new political philosophy for its rediscovery of the secular by recalling the moment at which the French Revolutionary calendar was given up, after one decade, and the Revolution was reintegrated, as it were, into the historical process with its twofold extension toward infinity. It was as though it was conceded that not even the Revolution, which, along with the promulgation of the American Constitution, is still the greatest event in modern political history, contained sufficient independent meaning in itself to begin a new historical process. For the Republican calendar was abandoned not merely because of Napoleon's wish to rule an Empire and to be considered the equal of the crowned heads of Europe. It also implied the refusal, despite the re-establishment of the secular, to accept the conviction of the ancients that political actions are meaningful regardless of their historical location, and especially a repudiation of the Roman faith in the sacredness of foundations with the accompanying custom of numbering time from the foundation date. Indeed, the French Revolution, which was inspired by the Roman spirit and appeared to the world, as Marx liked to say, in Roman dress, reversed itself in more than one sense.

An equally important landmark in the shift from the earlier concern with politics to the later concern with history is encountered in Kant's political philosophy. Kant, who had greeted in Rousseau "the Newton of the moral world," and had been greeted by his contemporaries as the theorist of the Rights of Man,[3] still had great difficulty in coping with the new idea of history, which had probably come to his attention in the writings of Herder. He is the last philosopher to complain in earnest about the "meaningless course of human affairs," the "melancholy haphazardness" of historical events and developments, this hopeless, senseless "mixture of error and violence,"

3 The first to see Kant as the theorist of the French Revolution was Friedrich Gentz in his *"Nachtrag zu dem Raesonnement des Herrn Prof. Kant ueber das Verhaeltnis zwischen Theorie und Praxis"* in *Berliner Monatsschrift*, December 1793.

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as Goethe once defined history. Yet Kant also saw, what others had seen before him, that once you look at history in its entirety (*im Grossen*), rather than at single events and the ever-frustrated intentions of human agents, everything suddenly makes sense, because there is always at least a story to tell. The process as a whole appears to be guided by an "intention of nature" unknown to acting men, but comprehensible to those who come after them. By pursuing their own aims without rhyme or reason men seem to be led by "the guiding thread of reason" (*Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbuergerlicher Absicht*).

It is of some importance to remember that Kant, like Vico before him, was already aware of what Hegel later called "the cunning of reason" (Kant occasionally called it "the ruse of nature"). He even had some rudimentary insight into historical dialectics, as when he pointed out that nature pursues its over-all aims through "the antagonism of men in society . . . without which men, good-natured like the sheep they tend, would hardly know how to give a higher value to their own existence than is possessed by their cattle." This shows to what extent the very idea of history as a process suggests that in their actions men are led by something of which they are not necessarily conscious and which finds no direct expression in the action itself. Or, to put it another way, it shows how extremely useful the modern concept of history proved to be in giving the secular political realm a meaning which it otherwise seemed to be devoid of. In Kant, in contrast to Hegel, the motive for the modern escape from politics into history is still quite clear. It is the escape into the "whole," and the escape is prompted by the meaninglessness of the particular. And since Kant's primary interest was still in the nature and principles of political (or as he would say, moral) action, he was able to perceive the crucial drawback of the new approach, the one great stumbling block which no philosophy of history and no concept of progress can ever remove. In Kant's own words: "It will always remain bewildering . . . that the earlier generations seem to carry on their burdensome business only for the sake of the later . . . and that only the last should have the good fortune to dwell in the [completed] building" (*Ibid.*).

The bewildered regret and great diffidence with which Kant resigned himself to introducing a concept of history into his political

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philosophy indicates with rare precision the nature of the perplexities which caused the modern age to shift its emphasis from a theory of politics, apparently so much more appropriate to its belief in the superiority of action to contemplation, to an essentially contemplative philosophy of history. For Kant was perhaps the only great thinker to whom the question: "What shall I do?" was not only as relevant as the two other questions of metaphysics: "What can I know?" and "What may I hope?", but formed the very center of his philosophy. Therefore he was not troubled, as even Marx and Nietzsche were later troubled, by the traditional hierarchy of contemplation over action, the *vita contemplativa* over the *vita activa*; nor was his problem the traditional hierarchy within the *vita activa* itself, where the acting of the statesman occupies the highest position, the making of the craftsman and artist an intermediary, and the laboring which provides the necessities for the functioning of the human organism, the lowest. (Marx was later to reverse this hierarchy too, although he wrote explicitly only about elevating action over contemplation and changing the world as against interpreting it. In the course of this reversal he had to upset the traditional hierarchy within the *vita activa* as well, by putting the lowest of human activities, the activity of labor, into the highest place. Action now appeared to be no more than a function of "the productive relationships" of mankind brought about by labor.) Kant's problem instead coincided with another evaluation which also belongs to the mainstays of traditional political and metaphysical thought, though it usually remains hidden and is rarely articulated fully. Traditional philosophy often pays only lip service to the estimate of action as the highest activity of man, preferring the so much more reliable activity of making.

However that may be, Kant could not but become aware of the fact that action fulfilled neither of the two hopes the modern age was bound to expect from it. If the secularization of our world implies the revival of the old desire for some kind of earthly immortality, then human action, especially in its political aspect, must appear singularly inadequate to meet the demands of the new age. From the point of view of motivation, action appears to be the least interesting and most futile of all human pursuits: "Passions, private aims, and the satisfaction of selfish desires, are . . . the most

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effective springs of action," said Hegel (in *The Philosophy of History*), and "the facts of known history" taken by themselves, said Vico, "possess neither a common basis nor continuity nor coherence." From the viewpoint of achievement, on the other hand, action appears to be at once more futile and more frustrating than the activities of laboring and of producing objects. Human deeds, unless they are remembered, are the most futile and perishable things on earth; they hardly outlast the activity itself and certainly by themselves can never aspire to that permanence which even ordinary use-objects possess when they outlast their maker's life, not to mention works of art, which speak to us over the centuries. Human action, projected into a web of relationships where many and opposing ends are pursued, almost never fulfills its original intention; no act can ever be recognized by its author as his own with the same happy certainty with which a piece of work of any kind can be recognized by its maker. Whoever begins to act knows that he has started something whose end he can never foretell, if only because his own deed has already changed everything and made it even more unpredictable. That is what Kant had in mind when he spoke of the "melancholy haphazardness" (*trostlose Ungefaehr*), which is so striking in the record of political history. "Action:" said Nietzsche, "one does not know its origin, one does not know its consequences:—therefore, does action possess any value at all?" (*Wille zur Macht,* No. 291) Were not the old philosophers right, and was it not madness to expect any meaning to arise out of the realm of human affairs?

For a long time it seemed that these inadequacies and perplexities within the *vita activa* could be solved by ignoring the peculiarities of action and by insisting upon the "meaningfulness" of the process of history in its entirety, which seemed to give to the political sphere that dignity and final redemption from "melancholy haphazardness" so obviously required. History, based on the manifest assumption that no matter how haphazard single actions may appear in the present and in their singularity, they inevitably lead to a sequence of events forming a story that can be rendered through intelligible narrative the moment the events are removed into the past, became the great dimension in which men could become "reconciled" with reality (Hegel), the reality of the *pragmata tôn anthrôpôn,* of things which owe their existence exclusively to men. More-

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over, since history in its modern version was conceived primarily as a process, it showed a peculiar and inspiring affinity to action, which, indeed, in contrast to all other human activities, consists first of all of starting processes—a fact of which human experience has of course always been aware, even though the preoccupation of philosophy with making as the most central human form of activity has prevented the elaboration of an articulate terminology and precise description. The very notion of process, which is so highly characteristic of modern science, both natural and historical, probably had its origin in this fundamental experience of action, to which secularization lent an emphasis such as it had not known since the very early centuries of Greek culture, before the rise of the *polis* and the victory of the Socratic school. History in its modern version could come to terms with this experience; and though it failed to save politics itself from the old disgrace, it has at least bestowed upon the record of past events that share of earthly immortality to which the modern age necessarily aspired. Though the process itself was thus saved, the single deeds and acts constituting the realm of politics, properly speaking, were left in limbo. Men no longer dared to claim "immortal glory" from posterity.

Today the Kantian and Hegelian way of becoming reconciled to reality through understanding the innermost meaning of the entire historical process seems to be quite as much refuted by our experience as the simultaneous attempt of pragmatism and utilitarianism to "make history" and impose upon reality the preconceived meaning and law of man. While trouble throughout the modern age has as a rule started with the natural sciences and has been the consequence of experience gained in the attempt to know the universe, this time the refutation rises simultaneously out of the physical and political fields.

In a public discussion Heidegger once pointed to the weird fact that one can prove everything by deduction from axioms, not only in the field of mental constructions such as over-all interpretations of the whole historical process, but in natural science as well.[4] We may recall, in this context, Heisenberg's statement that man, whenever he tries to learn about things which are neither himself nor owe their existence to him, will ultimately encounter nothing but

4 See p. 32 for note 4.

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himself, his own constructions and the patterns of his own actions.[5] This is no longer a question of academic objectivity. It cannot be solved by the reflection that man as a question-asking being naturally can only receive answers to match his own questions. If nothing more was involved, then we would be satisfied that different questions put "to one and the same physical event" reveal different but objectively equally "true" aspects of the same phenomenon, just as the table around which a number of people have taken their places is seen by each of them in a different aspect, without thereby ceasing to be the object common to all of them. One could even imagine that a theory of theories, like the old *mathesis universalis,* might eventually be able to determine how many such questions are possible or how many "different types of natural law" can be applied to the same natural universe without contradiction.

The matter would become somewhat more serious if it turned out that no question exists at all which does not lead to a consistent set of answers—a perplexity we mentioned earlier when we discussed the distinction between pattern and meaning. In this instance, the very distinction between meaningful and meaningless questions would disappear together with absolute truth, and the consistency we would be left with could just as well be the consistency of an asylum for paranoiacs or the consistency of the current demonstrations of the existence of God. However, what is really undermining the whole modern notion that meaning is contained in the process as a whole, from which the particular occurrence derives its intelligibility, is that not only can we prove this, in the sense of consistent deduction, but we can take almost any hypothesis and *act* upon it, with a sequence of results in reality which not only make sense but *work*. This means quite literally that everything is possible not only in the realm of ideas but in the field of reality itself.

4 Heidegger, in a discussion in Zurich, published under the title: *"Aussprache mit Martin Heidegger am 6. November 1951"* (Photodruck Jurisverlag Zuerich, 1952), said as follows: ". . . *auch der Satz: man kann alles beweisen, (ist) nicht ein Freibrief, sondern ein Hinweis auf die Moeglichkeit, dass dort, wo man beweist im Sinne der Deduktion aus Axiomen, dies jederzeit in gewissem Sinne moeglich ist. Das ist das unheimlich Raetselhafte, dessen Geheimnis ich bisher auch nicht an einem Zipfel aufzuheben vermochte, dass dieses Verfahren in der modernen Naturwissenschaft stimmt."*

5 Werner Heisenberg in recent publications renders this same thought in a number of variations. See for example *Das Naturbild der heutigen Physik,* 1956.

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In my studies of totalitarianism I tried to show that the totalitarian phenomenon, with its striking anti-utilitarian traits and its strange disregard for factuality, is based in the last analysis on the conviction that everything is possible, and not just permitted, morally or otherwise, as was the case with early nihilism. The totalitarian systems tend to demonstrate that action can be based on any hypothesis and that in the course of consistently guided action, the particular hypothesis will become true, will become actual, factual reality. The assumption which underlies consistent action can be as mad as it pleases; it will always end in producing facts which are then "objectively" true. What was originally nothing but a hypothesis, to be proved or disproved by actual facts, will in the course of consistent action always turn into a fact, never to be disproved. Or, to put the same matter the way Heidegger put it: The axiom from which the deduction is started does not need to be, as traditional metaphysics and logic supposed, a self-evident truth; it does not have to tally at all with the facts as given in the objective world at the moment the action starts; the process of action, if it is consistent, will proceed to create a world in which the assumption becomes axiomatic and self-evident.

The frightening arbitrariness with which we are confronted whenever we decide to embark upon this type of action, which is the exact counterpart of consistent logical processes, is even more obvious in the political than in the natural realm. But it is more difficult to convince people that this holds true for past history. The historian, by gazing backward into the historical process, has been so accustomed to discovering an "objective" meaning independent of the aims and awareness of the actors, that he is liable to overlook what actually happened, in his attempt to discern some objective trend. He will, for example, overlook the particular characteristics of Stalin's totalitarian dictatorship in favor of the industrialization of the Soviet empire or of the nationalistic aims of traditional Russian foreign policy.

Within the natural sciences things are not essentially different, but they appear more convincing because they are so far removed from the competence of the layman and his healthy stubborn common sense, which refuses to see what it cannot understand. Here, too, thinking in terms of processes, on the one hand, and the con-

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viction on the other, that I know only what I have myself made, has led to the complete meaninglessness inevitably resulting from the insight that I can choose to do whatever I want and some kind of "meaning" will always be the consequence. In both instances, the perplexity is that the particular incident, the observable fact or single occurrence of nature, or the reported deed and event of history, have ceased to make sense without a universal process in which they are supposedly embedded; yet, the moment man approaches this process in order to escape the haphazard character of the particular, in order to find meaning—order and necessity—his effort is rebutted by the answer from all sides: any order, any necessity, any meaning you wish to impose will do. This is the clearest possible demonstration that under these conditions there is neither necessity nor meaning. It is as though the "melancholy haphazardness" of the particular had now caught up with us and were pursuing us into the very region where the generations before us had fled in order to escape it. The decisive factor in this experience, both in nature and history, is not the patterns with which we tried to "explain," and which in the social and historical sciences cancel each other out more quickly, because they can all be consistently proved, than they do in the natural sciences where matters are more complex and for this technical reason less open to the irrelevant arbitrariness of irresponsible opinions. These opinions, to be sure, have an altogether different source, but are liable to becloud the very relevant issue of contingency, with which we are everywhere confronted today. What is decisive is that our technology, which nobody can accuse of not functioning, is based on these principles and that our social techniques, whose real field of experimentation lies in the totalitarian countries, have only to overcome a certain time-lag to be able to do for the world of human relations and human affairs as much as has already been done for the world of human artifacts.

The modern age, with its growing world-alienation, has led to a situation where man, wherever he goes, encounters only himself. All the processes of the earth and the universe have revealed themselves either as man-made or as potentially man-made. These processes, after having devoured, as it were, the solid objectivity of the given, ended by rendering meaningless the one over-all process which originally was conceived in order to give meaning to them, and to

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act, so to speak, as the eternal time-space into which they could all flow and thus be rid of their mutual conflicts and exclusiveness. This is what happened to our concept of History, as it happened to our concept of Nature. In the situation of radical world-alienation, neither History nor Nature are at all conceivable. This twofold loss of the world—the loss of nature and the loss of human artifice in the widest sense, which would include all history—has left behind it a society of men who, without a common world which would at once relate and separate them, live either in desperate lonely separation or are pressed together into a mass. For a mass society is nothing more than that kind of organized living which automatically establishes itself among human beings who are still related to each other, but have lost the world once common to all of them.

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Elisabeth Mann Borgese

THE REHEARSAL

Perhaps he hoped it would tire him so much he would have no energy left with which to be upset or angry; perhaps that it would purge and cleanse his mind; but most of all it seemed to him that if he walked, slowly setting one foot before the other, he would get there later. Walking would, he thought, delay the unpleasant encounter; as, of course, it did not, for Willem De Foe was inexorably punctual and he simply left home that much earlier than he would have had to leave had he taken the tram as usual. He left, in fact, before the housekeeper arrived, and he put a note for her on the kitchen table, saying he would be late for lunch and wanted an omelet and cheese and fruit, and that there was no beer in the house, and that she should call the laundryman. Then he took his raincoat and his briefcase and his violin case and locked the door and walked and walked.

He resented conductors in the first place. Perhaps that resentment flowed in his concert master's blood. They had run the show for centuries, the concert masters, and then, these intruders had appeared: somehow, they were a sign of the times—*duces,* leaders, dictators, hypnotizers of a proletarianized mass orchestra. To tell the truth, he despised the post-Wagnerian orchestra. In his spare time, he played the viola d'amore and all his love was centered on the seventeenth century, on those orchestras in which every member was a virtuoso and the concert master *primus inter pares.* Yet he was ready to admire the great conductors of the early and middle twentieth century. He remembered old Jenkins, under whom he had played when he himself was quite young, in the last chair of the second violins. Or Knatthaus and Armageddon, who came later, when he had moved forward to the concert master's chair. They were men he could understand and appreciate, though he felt quite embarrassed

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when, after the performance, he had to get up and shake the hand of one of these upstarts, intruders, parasites, and his fluffy white lock fell forward over his blushing forehead and he lowered his blue eyes as he bowed. But then came the women conductors and the child prodigies, and he felt bewildered and humiliated. They could not even explain what they wanted; they just put it across. And when he got up to shake their tiny hands after the performance, he felt like a cartoon in the *New Yorker*. And then came the blind conductors, with the supersensitive hands, which was where the real trouble began.

Willem De Foe was not only a concert master, in the old sense, he was also a master—one who had mastered a craft and enjoyed its mastery. To fall into a trance while playing, hardly to know what he had been playing after he played it, was repulsive to him; it humiliated and confused him and he yearned for his sixty-fifth birthday, still seven years away, which would give him the right to retire from the orchestra. He could go on giving private lessons, playing chamber music, and do some painting in his spare time: large trees in the Lowlands, with solid green flat horizons and distant little windmills.

The orchestra went into a trance. The audience went into a trance. And the world at large must have been in a trance. Imagine the state of mind parents had to be in, to gouge out the eyes of their promising boys in order to make better conductors of them. A few hundred years earlier, the same parents would have castrated their sons for the sake of their voices. But those too were mad times and the people at large were afflicted with St. Vitus's dance and worse. They did away with the castrating then, finally, as they had now done away with the blinding; but things had gone so far that conductors, even if they were not blind, had themselves led to the podium by slender young boys and they wore thick dark glasses and their hands were sensitive as though they were blind.

But that was not the worst.

It seemed only yesterday, but it must have been some twenty years ago that the first rumors came out of the Yerkes Laboratory that experiments were being made with teaching apes to talk. The scientists did not make much headway along this line, but it must have been just about that time that Dr. Hamilton Howard exhibited the first piano-playing ape, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for

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Physiology. Like all epoch-making discoveries, Dr. Howard's had been most simple. Having noted the fact—among the many brought to light in his nursery, among the pegs and chips and mazes and colors and marbles and fruits and traps and enticements and withdrawals and ups and downs—that apes can count to five, it had occurred to him, since he was a great lover of music, that apes ought to take to music. The musical staff has five lines, and the overtones you can hear whenever a note is struck are five; the most complicated chords are based on five elements, and five is the mystic number that dominates all music. If apes were able to count to five, exactly to five, and if all apes could do this, it clearly indicated that they were deeply imbued with musical sense and all that had to be done was to call it forth from them.

The results were indeed marvelous. Even the first ape generation achieved wonders, on practically all instruments, and three generations of special breeding, radioactively-induced genetic mutation and selection, combined with environmental conditioning, did the rest.

Nobody had ever heard such music. The piano seemed to be no longer a piano, the violin no longer a violin. Such teamwork was never before known. The performing apes seemed to be one single soul; composition, apes, instruments, and audience, all one single soul, entranced; and time ceased to exist. This happened, that is, if it was a good evening. The apes so penetrated the spirit of a composition that if the trainer left some blank spaces on the score, the sight-reading ape would inevitably fill in the notes correctly. One concertizing ape was known to have insisted on a D-sharp in a Haydn sonata, where the score had D-natural, to which the trainer stuck. But in vain. The ape played D-sharp until it was a scandal. At that point the aged Dr. Howard stepped in—it was the last time he made headlines before his death. He personally flew to London to consult the *Urtext* and behold, the *Urtext* had D-sharp. . . .

Superb it was, when the apes were in form. But they were not always. It seemed that one wrong note, a sloppy octave, a miscalculated jump, sufficed to throw the simian mind into utter confusion. And any artist, man or ape, is apt to play a wrong note, once in a while. The ape's memory collapsed in such cases. He would furiously repeat the wrong note, trill on it violently, bang on the piano with hands and feet, then turn to grimace at the audience, strumming with his behind

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on the keyboard in obscene rhythms. Then the trainer would rush forward cracking a whip or eventually shooting a pistol, trying thereby to forestall the worst: ape duos were liable at such moments to engage in deadly combat, more than one Stradivarius had fallen prey to their destructive moods, and the audience too, from the heights of enravishment, easily lowered itself to lynching.

Strange mankind. Willem De Foe looked at his feet, in the clumsy buckled calf boots they wore in the mid-twentieth century, at his ankles covered by gray gaiters, as they overcame space, slowly but safely, one two, one two, as man had done since time immemorial . . . and he felt how his gait was encircled, besieged, importuned, threatened, crushed and made nonsense of by the cars, bicycles, torpedoes, hoppicopters and helicopters that made up the noisy, maddening multilayer traffic of midtown, as he approached Concert Hall. He clasped his violin case, made of genuine alligator, with his initials on it, and with a velvet lining, worn away in spots, which had served him over forty years, and he felt how his art, his pure and disinterested craft, was enclosed, pressed, squeezed, belittled, annulled, made absurd by the innovations of these days. The circle had closed, airtight and foolproof. The most futuristic means produced the most archaic effects. Of flutes and snakes he thought, of the Pied Piper, of groups crazed by irresistible rhythms and dancing to their death, of others regaining their senses under the healing smoothness of song. He thought of cows munching in air-conditioned stables, their glands lovingly quickened by the outpouring of sweet milking music, the grass visibly growing as the horn sounded. Of certain ancient modes he thought, and wondered how it was that they disturbed the Greeks so much they had to be censored by the government, and then he saw it all happening again before his eyes—the crazed masses and the government seizing control of their art. Only what had been simple and unconscious had become complex and calculated; electronic instruments were producing sounds more elementary than the elements, and brutes were now sophisticated.

Yet man, he thought, remained always the same. In a shop window before which he had stopped, he saw white on black and black on white and the prices blurred on the tags. Then it all took the shape of brassières, corsets, pantie girdles, slips, nightgowns, and

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the blood rose to his cheeks—it was rather undignified to be caught looking at such things—when he recognized Julie's voice; she always had to clear a little hoarseness from it, nervously, before speaking to him, saying, "Good morning, Professor. You too are early today?"

"Oh," he said. "Oh." And he touched politely the rim of his hat. "Oh, I was just going to say, 'You too are late today?' "

They both smiled in a silly way and walked on together. He looked at her askance, her mildly Semitic face with the lightly fluffed astonished little mouth, discreetly lipsticked, her small friendly nose and the doe eyes which were the prettiest part of her pleasing though far from handsome appearance. She had straight black hair, worn in a bun at her neck, and in her short dark blue camel's hair coat and low-heeled oxfords, she walked somehow like a sailor, holding her violin case like a bundle under her arm. Odd, he thought, when she plays she is beautiful. He had thought it often, during the lessons, before she took her diploma; he would accompany her distractedly, by ear, without looking at the notes, in order to look at her face, serious and strong, each feature intensified and ennobled, and her unimportant little hand become gracile and nimble. And he thought it often as he watched her, after she had taken her diploma and was sitting next to him in the orchestra, leading the second violins; often he let her take over, with her clear clean tone, again feeling distracted, as though he were merely accompanying her on the piano, as he looked at her face.

The stage door opened and the ape came in. He walked on his hind legs and he was huge; his long arms dangled loosely as he walked. Now and then he touched the parquet floor with his fingertips, and he seemed to enjoy this touch and yet feel guilty and apologetic about it. He held the baton between his teeth.

It was his first rehearsal with the symphony orchestra. The members rose respectfully to greet him. The woodwinds applauded by clapping their hands, while the strings drummed with their bows on their music stands. The ape swung himself onto the platform, bowed repeatedly, then joined the clamor, drumming with the baton on the stand. He did this half, it seemed, in apish imitation, and half leading the noise, quickening its rhythm and raising its intensity. Grinning. Then suddenly he stopped and held his baton, this extension

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of his already long arm, high up, firm. He was naked but for a velvet loin cloth, with tassels on both sides, which quivered and then stood still. The orchestra too stopped, in dead silence. He had them then and there.

After a couple of seconds that seemed eternal, he ended the grave silence by a sweeping circular motion of his arm downward. The musicians all had the impression they had come to the end of some strange work; they did not know what it had been.

On the chair next to the ape's platform the music for this morning's rehearsal was piled, and he bent down, the baton again in his teeth, to pick out a score, and then held it up, moving it from left to right, so everyone in the orchestra could see it: Ravel's *Bolero*. The orchestra silently adjusted their own books on their stands. That was one of the unnerving features of these simian rehearsals: there was not a word spoken, not a word the whole morning. "Gentlemen," they had been told, in more or less strange accents, in former rehearsals. "Gentlemen, that was much too loud." "But please! That should have been apocalyptic! Don't you feel it, gentlemen?" At least this reminded them that they were men, the spoken explanations injected an element of rationality into the performance, which was thus kept from rapture. But here: nothing but the music itself, and gestures. And such expressiveness.

The ape gave much more than the trainer could have imparted to him. First, however, he did nothing at all. He just stood there, drooping, touching the platform with his hands somewhat like a runner at the start of a race, waiting for the starting gun. But by and by his whole body began to writhe. He was the snake and the snake charmer, the shrunken, dark figure in the turban, crouching and piping the melody, and the beast, hypnotized by it. The ape submitted to the melodious dreariness. It invaded him. It pleaded with him, saying it again and again and again. The flute, the bassoon, the soprano clarinet. Meekness made maddening by multiplication. When he could not bear it any longer, filled to capacity with the spell he had made them cast on him, the ape rose suddenly erect, with a subduing motion toward the haunting melody that came from the woodwinds, and beckoned the percussion instruments into the foreground, where they remained throughout, ever more dominant and joined in their obsessive rhythm by as many

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other instruments as he could win over to his side. He goaded and infuriated them and finally he drummed with them, out of them, into them, beating with hard fists driven by weirdly loose wrists and elbows on his hairy chest. The woodwinds and strings retreated as into the subconscious.

He climbed higher, winding his legs around the railing of the platform, and his rump rose in the air as from the crown of a jungle tree; it swung in the breeze as he spread his long arms to salute the rising sun . . . and the celesta responded.

Suddenly he leaped down from the platform, as if attacking an enemy. He seemed to be furious with De Foe and the strings, who had abandoned their modest background pizzicatos for ample sweeping motions of their bows. He bared his teeth and while his left hand was raised in an attempt to contain the melody, his right arm was down, palm open and stretched forward, shaking and trembling in a gesture of rage more human than any man could make.

Human emotions and sensations became small in the face of his passion. There was the jungle and there was the universe; man could not feel like the high point of creation, a being who had subjugated matter and life to the spirit of his art. This spirit was there, independent of him and much bigger than he. He reflected it but wearily: a worn-out experiment, a small corner in a world of untapped resources.

The first violins were at rest now. Willem De Foe closed his eyes tight, the lids pressed together, trying to blot out the specter. Then he turned toward Julie, expecting to see her pleasant features made intense and beautiful by the art that drove her. But what a shocking and horrid sight: her doe eyes, the prettiest part of her, were bloodshot, brutish, piercing, fixed on the ape. Her chin, pressed on the violin, protruded, deepening the lines down both sides of her mouth, making it snoutlike, and darkening the shadow of down on her upper lip and around it. The trombone was obstinately wailing out the theme, against the ape, and Julie plucked her pizzicatos from the body of her instrument with the gusto of a monkey plucking lice from his chest. Jesus Rhesus, De Foe thought, and as the first violins now followed the woodwinds into the melody, first part, which recurred here for the seventh time, he tried to play some courage into him-

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self, but felt instantly almost blacked out by the dark open palm at the end of the ape's left arm, looming over him, like a bad omen, while his right reinforced the jungle rhythm of drums and horns.

Then it happened. Just at the figure "13" on the score. Ominous 13. The ape missed. Just at the point where it was Julie's turn to bring in the second violins with the melody, first part, that recurred here for the eighth time. The ape missed. He summoned the violas, forgetting the second violins. De Foe jumped up, raised his bow to tap the first viola player and bring him to his senses so the road would be cleared for Julie. But he never reached him, because, as he extended his bow, Julie lunged forward and sunk her large teeth in the flesh of his forearm. The down on her upper lip was blood-stained as he wrenched free. The trainer, in the first row of the auditorium, drew his pistol and got it cocked.

"Stop it! Stop being brutes!" De Foe shouted and was amazed at how his voice carried through this bacchanalia: these were the first words spoken that morning by anyone, and he thought he noted a certain humanizing effect. He reached out his leg and forced Julie's foot to beat the right measure. He asserted the melody, and the second violins joined in. Then the flutes, oboes, horns, clarinets, and saxophones fell in line. The drums sounded rather quiet now, and the ape, holding a part of his baton, which he had broken in confused anger, in each hand, followed in silly hula-hula motions, turned toward the audience, like a jazz conductor.

De Foe saw it through: the second part of the melody, with the triads, recurring for the seventh and eighth time, quite triumphantly now, then the first part again, climactically, and quickly the second; but he was aware of the fact that many of the instruments were defecting from his lead to join the rising jungle-drum rhythm: the horns, the basses, and, alas, the second violins. As they reached "18" on the score, the ape swung around again and took over, his teeth bared, grunting, hopping, farting, and drumming on his chest; smashing in with infernal bangs, dissonances, barbaric little figurations: it all sounded as if he had invented it just that minute. Certainly the music had never before been performed with such bravura. They were almost dead when it was over.

No one was allowed to enter the conductor's dressing room—not even, or especially not, De Foe. The trainer told him he would get his

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violin case and his hat and coat for him, but De Foe looked in through the half-open door and saw the ape crouched on a chair, his legs drawn up under his body. Surrounded by loneliness and hostility, he was taking large bites from a whole pineapple which he held in both hands, shooting angry dark glances into the void around him, as though to make sure that nobody would take that pineapple away from him.

The ape's performance with the orchestra was canceled; but the Sunday following the rehearsal De Foe and Julie were married. Nothing was ever said about the scar on his arm. Both understood they could not face such danger again.

They were on their honeymoon when the news of the ape's next concert, in another city, reached them. He had done it again. He had missed the entry of the second violins at "13" on the score. He did it on purpose, the wicked creature, after the humiliation we inflicted on him, De Foe surmised. But this time there had been no one to prevent the consequences. The second violins hurled themselves upon the violas; the whole orchestra joined the melee and most of the instruments were smashed. The trainer's pistol shots echoed unheeded, and enveloped in a cloud of tear gas the quiet harpist cut off her breasts, and many of the men castrated themselves. The ape was sent back to the Yerkes Laboratory after that, and the *Bolero* proscribed by the government. It can still be heard occasionally, on records, in questionable houses in the red-light district of town. People say it never fails to induce excesses of the wildest kind.

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Richard Chase

RADICALISM TODAY

A Dialogue

—Hello, Silverman. I was expecting you. Come in. Take a chair.

—Shall I close the door? The corridor is rather noisy.

—Yes, please do.

—Professor Chase, your discussion in class of *The Wings of the Dove* was most enlightening. But one thing is not clear to me. What is the moral core of the book? R. P. Blackmur says. . .

—*The Wings of the Dove* is not an apple, Silverman. There is no moral core to speak of. James's novel is a poem, an elegy. After we have read it, we feel sorry for the heroine and perhaps for all humanity. We want people to be kind to each other. We do not like personal betrayals of the kind perpetrated by Densher and Kate Croy. As for the general vision of life in *The Wings of the Dove*, it is a beautiful, an astonishing fantasy.

—If I may say so, sir, some of us think that your attitude these days is very sardonic. Have you abandoned the moral level of literature? Where is youth to find leadership in these troubled times?—That's ironical, of course. But sincere too. Do you understand?

—Perfectly.

—Well, the fact is, Professor Chase, we think you have become a radical in your old—er, middle age—no offense. Would you explain what it means to be a radical today?

—That is a difficult but a sincere and meaningful question, Silverman. I'll be glad to answer it. As you know, that is my professional duty, and in this case, my pleasure. I don't want to sound unnecessarily ironic but the first thought that occurs to me is that radicalism today is something students ask their elders about. But to

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be serious, radicalism today in America means (with certain differences) what it meant to Randolph Bourne in 1917 (see "Twilight of Idols," in the new collection of Bourne's essays, *The History of a Literary Radical and Other Papers*[1]). It means responding to the "allure" of the "thorough malcontents," if, that is, any can be found. It means "irritation at things as they are, disgust at the continual frustrations and aridities of American life, deep dissatisfaction with self and with the groups that give themselves forth as hopeful." Let me read a little more from this fine essay. Bourne says, "they are quite through"—the malcontents—"with the professional critics and classicists who have let cultural values die through their own ineptitude. Yet these malcontents have no intention of being cultural vandals, only to slay. They are not barbarians, but seek the vital and sincere everywhere. . . . They will be harsh and often bad-tempered, and they will feel that the break-up of things is no time for mellowness. They will have a taste for spiritual adventure, and for sinister imaginative excursions. It will not be Puritanism so much as complacency that they will fight. A tang, a bitterness, an intellectual fiber, a verve, they will look for in literature. . . . They are . . . entangled emotionally in the possibilities of American life. . . . They will give offense to their elders who cannot see what all the concern is about, and they will hurt the more middle-aged sense of adventure upon which the better integrated minds of the younger generation will have compromised. Optimism is often compensatory, and the optimistic mood in American thought may mean that American life is too terrible to face. A more skeptical, malicious, desperate, ironical mood may actually be the sign of more vivid and more stirring life fermenting in America today. It may be a sign of hope. That thirst for more of the intellectual 'war and laughter' that we find Nietzsche calling us to may bring us satisfactions that optimism-haunted philosophies could never bring. Malcontentedness may be the beginning of promise." Does this sort of thing appeal to you, Silverman?

—I can't really say that I know what he means. But I feel the force of the words.

—Have you heard of Randolph Bourne?

—Yes, sir, he is mentioned in Dos Passos' *USA*.

—You will know, then, that Bourne was "maladjusted." He was

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physically deformed, for one thing. Van Wyck Brooks says that he had a "queer twisted face." But was he bitter or vindictive, as people claim? No more than was necessary, I would say. His essays are surprisingly genial. He is deeply and indulgently interested in all the foibles of human behavior. He loves the texture of life (you must read of his adventures with the spiritually liberated French girl in the essay called *"Mon Amie";* and you will enjoy the wistful humor and realism of his story about the child, "Ernest: or Parent for a Day"). He was human, all too human.

—Isn't that a quotation from Nietzsche, Professor?

—Yes, it is, Silverman. Modern radicalism is in part Nietzschean. But let me repeat and generalize. I apologize for being so formal. Radicalism today begins with the radicalism launched by Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, and their associates in the years between 1912 and 1918. (Bourne died in 1918 at the age of 32. He was a student at Columbia, as you know, and was often in this very building. Perhaps he sat on the chair you are sitting on, it is old and rickety enough.) Bourne and Brooks were writing in the tradition of Whitman, as well as in a European tradition that may be broadly called "Nietzschean." Put it down in the chronicle of American culture that whenever Whitman is dismissed as pretentious, romantic, irresponsible, incoherent, etc., American culture is enfeebled and isolated from the source of its own strength and individuality, although these sources are not confined to the tradition of Whitman. We are more fortunate than Brooks and Bourne, because *they* are a part of our radical tradition.

—I realize that there is a revival of Whitman, Professor Chase. I am sorry that I have not had time to read your book on him. To be frank, I don't like Whitman. He's too vague, almost crazy, one might say. Where are the moral confrontations in his writings? F. R. Leavis says. . .

—Oh, there's no revival of Whitman, Silverman. But let me go on. Radicalism today is not directly political or economic.

—Well, I am glad to hear that. Those things don't interest me.

—They should. But the point is that radicalism is a method, a polemical attitude, an attack. It does not pretend to be timeless truth. Therefore it must be acutely aware of what it can and cannot do at a given moment in history. For the moment, American politics and

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economics, on the domestic scene, appear impenetrable, mysterious, and roughly successful. A revolutionary politics or economics makes no sense as applied to contemporary America. What does make sense, in improving our economic and political life, is the liberal virtues: moderation, compromise, countervailing forces, the vital center, the mixed economy—plus the usual cynicism.

—Is that what they call the moral intelligence?

—Yes, I should think it is.

—It occurs to me, sir, that "moral intelligence" is redundant. Don't you agree that no thought is intelligent unless it is moral?

—No, Silverman; remember Bourne's remark about the Nietzschean "war and laughter" of the intelligence. But let me continue. My point is that the virtues just referred to are those we do *not* want to invoke in our criticism of the general culture—that large complex of arts and letters, aesthetic attitudes, manners and morals, public poses and gestures, opinions, tastes, shared fantasies, humor, slang, folk tradition—in short, the vital medium in which we live when we are doing something more than merely existing. The general culture has recently been showing anew its nearly fatal tendency, whenever we let its energy and vitality flag, to collapse into middlebrowism, compromise, centrality, the middle way. At the present time, these are not virtues in American culture; they are its bane. They have been so ever since the smiling father of modern middlebrowism, Howells —that moderate, vaguely raffish, plausibly genteel man with the clearing-house brain and the tireless evasiveness and cunning intelligence, who despite his noted receptivity to writers different from himself, could see nothing in Whitman.

—Isn't that portrait of Howells a bit overdone, Professor?

—I have to admit that it is rather fancy. Howells inspires in me a perverse poetry. I am thinking of founding a literary society; the fraternal salutation among the members will be "In the bowels of Howells." But I see you are looking at your watch, Silverman, and I know you are a busy man. I will try to be concise in the rest of what I have to say. The fact we radicals start with is that the kind of criticism that applies to American politics and economics does not apply to American culture. This is one of the invigorating contradictions we live with, in a civilization that defines itself, on the rare occasions when it has the courage to do so, by its contradictions. Randolph

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Bourne might have seen the necessity for making the distinction clear had he lived longer. Van Wyck Brooks seemed on the verge of seeing it, but his interests went off in other directions and he became more and more in all things the middlebrow. It has been said that Brooks "abdicated" his position of cultural leadership after his early works. If so, it was not only because he was tired and took the easy way but because his impossible dream of an organic liberal nationalistic American civilization led him to apply the precepts which are suitable to a liberal politics and economics to culture and literature as well. It was thus that he failed us, after his brilliant beginning.

—A minute ago, Professor Chase, you used the word "middlebrow." Of course, radicals are highbrows, aren't they?

—No, radicals are no-brows, if you will permit the term. These terms are rather unstable, to be sure, but they have a crude applicability. In at least one important sense of the word, nearly everyone is a middlebrow these days, including many of those who think of themselves as highbrows or lowbrows. The liberal critics, the philistine critics, the academic critics—these perennially look for a middle ground of taste and opinion whereon tensions and oppositions can be ignored or, in fantasy, reconciled. The more recondite critics find in myth, symbol, and tragic "action" their own arduous ways of liquidating contradictions.

—But the no-brow. . .?

—Is someone with enough detachment and receptivity to roam over the cultural spectrum at will. His thought is the intellectual equivalent of Faulkner's imagination—or Melville's or Whitman's

—Now, really, Professor Chase. You can't be serious in proposing Faulkner as an example of intelligence. His work lacks moral ideas. He dislikes middle-class culture, which is to say, in our time, that he dislikes culture itself. There are no characters of high intelligence or moral complexity in Faulkner, whereas in George Eliot. . . . But I know you don't approve of her.

—Oh, but I do, Silverman. However, we will discuss her another time if you like. As for Faulkner, I think you misunderstood me. I did not propose extracting a philosophy from his works. I merely drew an analogy intending to suggest that the colorful dialectics of his imagination might stir up analogous but different dialectics in our rational inquiries into social reality. This is perhaps what Bourne

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meant by saying that the radical "will have a taste for spiritual adventure, and for sinister imaginative excursions." Don't you think that, properly employed, these may be valuable activities of the mind?

—I have never thought so. But it interests me and I will think it over. But tell me, Professor, what does the radical do with his dialectic?

—In our time the radical's chief task is to bring both ends against the middle. Even if temperamentally he would like to be a middlebrow, he finds himself unable to breathe in that musty atmosphere of turgid emotions and irritable, shapeless ideas.

—Isn't playing both ends against the middle a bit of a shell game?

—Perhaps, but for creditable purposes.

—You mean a radical must use irony, must seem to contradict himself?

—Yes, unhappily, he must. And not only as a critic but as an American. America is a culture of contradictions. One does not speak with assurance of *the* American mind or imagination. But both our thinkers and our imaginative writers have been at their best and, it is possible to wager, at their most characteristic when they were mindful of contradictions.

—What would you say are the sources of this habit of mind?

—That is a question I have been trying to answer at length on various occasions, and cannot go into now. A full answer would merely be an elaboration, on historical principles, of what Brooks, in 1915 in *America's Coming-of-Age,* called the "split" in American culture—the split between spirit and instinct, intelligence and action, art and reality, theory and practice, the highbrow and the lowbrow. Nearly all perceptive observers have noticed this cleavage, from Tocqueville on down. Nearly all have recommended, in all departments of our civilization, a healing attitude of mediation, reconciliation, and middle-of-the-wayism.

It has never been possible until our time to say with conviction that such an attitude is healing in some areas of our civilization but damaging in others. To be radical now is to be able to respond to the "skeptical, malicious, desperate, ironical mood" that prepares one to affirm the cultural virtues of this very cleavage that haunts the moralists and distresses the middle-of-the-roaders. After all, irony, wit,

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dialectic, drama, finally intelligence itself—all are impossible without a sharp sense of contraries and oppositions. Why should a culture of contradictions not glory in being what it is? As Whitman gloried in America and in himself because both were contradictory.

Now, it is Whitman who is most often cited, erroneously, as the mediator of opposites, the great salubrious healthy man of equability —*me imperturbe,* and so on, the first critic so citing him being Walt Whitman himself. But on other occasions Whitman much more convincingly proclaims himself "agonistic," self-polarizing, not to mention neurotic. And because they did not understand or appreciate this latter Whitman, D. H. Lawrence and Brooks misinterpreted him as the great reconciler and middleman.

In *Studies in Classic American Literature* Lawrence says that Whitman was the first great American writer to point the way toward the necessary reconciliation of spirit and matter, intelligence and instinct. As he expressed it, "Whitman was the first to break the mental allegiance. He was the first to smash the old moral conception, that the soul of man is something 'superior' and 'above' the flesh. Even Emerson still maintained that tiresome 'superiority' of the soul. Even Melville could not get over it. Whitman was the first heroic seer to seize the soul by the scruff of her neck and plant her down among the potsherds." So far so good. But Whitman does not say to the soul, as Lawrence makes him say, "There, stay there!" What Whitman really says is: *"Don't* stay there! Fly free, disentangle, define yourself as soul and not as potsherd, and when you get too uppity or too thin and hungry for want of life among the potsherds, I'll plant you down again." When his mind is working properly, Whitman is a free spirit, a dialectician. In the end, Lawrence (great man that he was) is a rather turgid moralist. Sorry, I seem to be giving a lecture. Do you follow me, Silverman?

—Yes, I think so. What you say is very interesting. Except I don't go along with that last bit about Lawrence. I have read *America's Coming-of-Age;* but I confess I did not understand it very well. Some of the remarks about Longfellow and Hawthorne were amusing. But I thought on the whole the book was—well, too extreme; that's not quite the word I want.

—Perhaps I can help you, by recalling some of Brooks's remarks on Whitman. This is what he says: "we have the rudiments of a

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middle tradition, a tradition that effectively combines theory and action, a tradition just as fundamentally American as either flag-waving or money-grabbing, one that is visibly growing but which has already been grossly abused; and this is the tradition that begins with Walt Whitman. The real significance of Whitman is that he, for the first time, gave us the sense of something organic in American life." Brooks goes on to describe Whitman as "a great vegetable of a man, all of a piece in roots, flavor, substantiality and succulence, well ripened in the common sunshine. In him the hitherto incompatible extremes of the American temperament were fused. The refinement of the Puritan tradition, summed up as an original type in Jonathan Edwards, able to make nothing of a life so rude in its actuality, turned for its outlet to a disembodied world, the shadow world of Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe, a world fastidiously intellectual in which only two colors exist, white and black. Whitman was the Antaeus of this tradition who touched earth with it and gave it hands and feet. For having all the ideas of New England, being himself saturated with Emersonianism, he came up from the other side with everything New England did not possess: quantities of rude feeling and a faculty of gathering humane experience almost as great as that of the hero of the Odyssey." "Whitman," says Brooks, "precipitated the American character." He became for us the "focal center" which "is the first requisite of a great people." Yet, Brooks adds, Whitman tended to be beyond his depth "on the plane of ideas" and his "social ideal" remains "essentially a collection of raw materials molten and malleable, which take shape only in an emotional form." Consequently it is the duty of the new intelligentsia, for which Brooks calls, to articulate and explain Whitman's "middle tradition." This is Brooks's main mistake.

Whitman is not a enormous middlebrow cabbage. He does not dissolve and reconcile in his succulent emotional juices the contradictions of his culture. When he makes sense as a poet or a social critic he does so exactly by his ability to objectify and illustrate those very contradictions. It is no longer possible to suppose that Whitman is the "focal center" of our civilization. What Brooks had in mind is shown by his linking, in this respect, Virgil, Mazzini, and Björnson with Whitman. He had in mind, that is, small relatively homogeneous countries and the cultural situation that arises in such

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countries during intensely nationalistic eras, such as the nineteenth century. But America is "trans-national," as Bourne wrote. It is cosmopolitan, immense. There is no "focal center" of American culture. No writer, no matter how great or vague in outline, can be the sort of symbolic image of centrality Brooks saw in Whitman. Our writers embody our culture to the extent that they embody its contradictions. There are many ways of doing this, besides the Whitman way.

—You seem to be against Brooks, Professor. I thought you claimed him as a fellow radical. Aren't you contradicting yourself, more than is necessary, I mean?

—No, Silverman. My point is that Brooks's early writings are radical because they isolated and defined for the first time the nature of a realistic criticism of American culture. Brooks discovered the dialectics of our culture. He showed us the way. His error was to conclude that all departments of our civilization would benefit by a reconciliation of extremes. Actually, there were good reasons for coming to this conclusion in 1915. At that time it was impossible not to see a rather frightening void between the highbrow and the lowbrow. But now the void, like a hungry vacuum, has long since been filled to the point of surfeit and suffocation. The doors must be flung open. The cold air, the passionate light, the abounding energy must be let in. We need the gay science, the. . .

—Excuse me, Professor. Radicals appear to be as much given to metaphors as are liberals and conservatives.

—Perhaps, Silverman. But the radical's metaphors are more interesting.

—Well, I will grant you that. But it does seem to me that your approach—extremist, dialectic, or whatever you call it—is in danger of becoming rather abstract and sterile. I can't help noticing in Brooks and Bourne, and in what you say too, a strong Calvinist tendency, if I may say so. I think you would like either grace or damnation (probably the latter) but would be uncomfortable in a merely human, middling, good-and-evil sort of position. The moral imagination warns us against a too intense spirituality. True gaiety and geniality come from the middling emotions. The will must relax into the ordinary conditions of its being.

—There is much in what you say, Silverman. Ideas are fully

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human only when suffused with the relaxed emotions. But how, in a culture of contradictions, shall we relax, except upon those very contradictions?

—I think I see what you mean, but it is a difficult idea.

—What we were just saying reminds me of something Randolph Bourne says over and over. He wants not only "fresh and true ideas, free speculation, artistic vigor, cultural styles." He wants intelligence to be "suffused with feeling" and he wants feeling to be "given fiber and outline by intelligence." Every humane person must agree with him.

—I am glad to hear that.

—But among our middlebrows today feeling is emasculated and muffled by intelligence (or what passes for it), whereas intelligence is rendered morose, defensive, and nihilistic by feeling.

—What writers are you referring to?

—No names, Silverman. I have mentioned too many names in the past. It always gets me in hot water; it is bad for my career. I refer to writers who purport to size up the literary situation but who have nothing to offer us except an attack on "the critics," the "highbrows." These writers claim to carry on the tradition of Brooks and Bourne. But actually they perpetuate the failures and not the successes of that tradition. They seem incapable of reassessing the Brooks-Bourne critique in the light of recent history. Of course, we radicals are "against the critics" too, but in a reasoned way. We are not blindly passionate, at least not in talking about the critics. After all, we *are* critics.

—I see. Well, thank you for your time. I have to go now. I will certainly think over your comments very carefully.

—Good, Silverman. Let's keep in touch. Come in again when you get a chance. Meanwhile, I hope you will read Bourne's essays. Bourne constantly speaks in the name of the younger generation—"youth" is a word that is always on his lips. He has a disparaging essay on "This Older Generation." Some day I must write an essay putting him in his place. But that time is not yet.

—Always the ironist, eh, Professor?

—It is my fate, Silverman. See you later.

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POEMS

UNDERSTANDING STATUES

The statue might be shaped like the prow of a ship
With people standing up to greet the shore;
The statue might consist of a serpent twined
About human forms; or a man alone might be more
Remarkable, riding a horse. Beneath the beast
The pigeons miss the rain. Let us start there.

On a fair day the pigeons roost on head
And shoulders, pecking at grass that seems to grow
From the hero's ear. Or one may stand on his hand,
Puffed and peerless, if the sculptor turned it so
Ceremoniously, outwards, to the air:
Around a finger the pigeon winds a toe.

Daily the birds ascend the mounted man,
Attending to their business, such as it is:
The sculpture suffers from a weight of wings.
Yet what the concentration of pigeons shows
Is that their understanding of the statue
Must be true, or if it is not, who knows?

And yet, such distance lies between this statue
And the flock in occupation there,
The smallest doubt is settled by a stare:
Exposed to every weather, the statue stands
With all the birds in its care, to commemorate
Something grand: a prosperous reign or a war.

Emma Swan

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POLARIS

The night my fever broke
I sweat ten dreams of death,
but one dream other woke
my blood: my driven breath
like rainsqualls in my mouth
blew out and swung, force five,
steady from the South.
I dreamed I was alive

the night the weather broke,
the night we lay hove to
against the gale that woke
us into love. Back through
that morning where the mast
whipped, drumming on the hum
of shrouds, I sailed the last
of my delirium.

The night my fever broke
I hung in irons, blown far
off course. I swung and woke,
not to choose a star,
but to be compassed—full
and by—in your sure sight;
our weather turned, the pole-
star like a masthead light.

Philip Booth

TWO POEMS

Landing

This afternoon I am very careful.
I watch myself. I watch the egg
Unhatched. I am the sight

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Over the egg, like an aviator
Unknowing but confident
That the instrument will behave.
The window outscaped
Brings the climate indoors.
The eye is free, adorned
By that which is becoming.
What is near, prevalent, adored
By the inner is echoed
By the ear. My conscience
Is receptive. I sight the cause
Of the exterior and so I hear
What is sounded in the interior.
Yet the break is this:
The germinal is split.
Not content with eye and sphere,
I race the continual
And drift to the absurd,
The conjugal, from which
The flight is only heard.

The Time of Day

Or when I see a sailor in front of my house, on the sidewalk
He is hurrying, the church bells are ringing:
"Okay!" says the man who takes the money.

Or when two nuns enter the library, one of them is going to smile
She is not thinking of what is ahead:
"Okay!" says the man who takes the money.

Or the mannequin who opens a closet full of hats
His arm holds his elbow and the hand caresses the face while he selects:
"Okay!" says the man who takes the money.

Or when someone addresses me who is not a regular member of the Army
And I answer, good afternoon, Major:
"Okay!" says the man who takes the money.

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Or when I go into the room and close my door
It is the hour for decisions and I am going to take a little nap:
"Okay!" says the driver.

Barbara Guest

IN WINTER TREES

At the end of the linked chain of prosperity,
Out of the florist's of possibility, after the ball in the backyard
Has bounced away from the boy in bed, I come
To the end of a dream in the evergreen cribs of a wood,
And there, let my limbs stretch to the blood's last link.
There, past the green in which they grew, are the trees
The winter takes as the year's standard soldiers' heads;
The hatless of time
In the arms and legs of their knowing
And the prison of their mind. All that they ever did
Left like pen-wipings on a writing pad,
The sleeves of the impression the green black blades have made—
That is the motion of experience and the shadow's wound
That the knife cannot fulfill until the gray surgeons bald
In the knowledge that their cutting killed; the youthful shoots
That bloomed with arms and legs for limbs are now the trunks
Of covered holes we know as scars; these are the windows
Against which sweat gathers in winter sleep
And runs to join the chain that moves beneath the limbs:
How, in a wood, all things are once again possible.

Theodore Holmes

CONDEMNED

In tumbrils rumbling over cobblestones
They, in hempen garments, might have seen
Pictures out of the past, the dungeons, thrones,
The parade of years that were, or might have been;

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But he who lived to tell watched one far roof,
Sun-gilt, its rays of light like spears of rye.
Gehenna was a land he knew in youth.
He smelled the chestnuts roasting in braziers scenting sky.
Now because the Prince of Darkness rose,
Skirted shop fronts, cut across the park,
The dustmen sweeping gutters with a hose
Could show an easy way to do hard work.
Terror in wait at the corner makes concrete
Whatever vagary touches on the way.
Eyes worked plummets through the somber street,
Looking into the faces of the day,
Looked for all the days time seduced.
Were these the eyes of Brueghel, eyes of Proust?

I cannot say what horsemen passed me by
Nor why the windy fields play muffled drums,
When sprigs in slants of light preoccupy
And my thinking is a wren that pecks at crumbs,
But recall one night when headlights from a car
Awakened the wild parsley in a ditch,
And over the tops of cedar-trees a star
Flared out, but the heavens sparkled, all as rich—
Such times as worlds are emptied with a twist:
The face that should have listened frowned instead.
Times when the world says Go, you will not be missed,
Send vision settling, dust-motes, in the head,
And one may see, as in cleared air, a bough,
The aspect of a road, a weed-field's domes—
Such things the simplest moments might allow.
And when he looked up over the cobblestones,
The hills, the monstrous hills of his fate, grew shy.
Tomorrow lay along a spear of rye.

Claire McAllister

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B. M. Wolpert

A FALSE NOTE

When the decree was made final, she left the city of her seven-year marriage and went back to the university town where, as she remembered it, life had been less stifling. Through this return to the campus, she felt she could blow away Arthur and the seven years as though they had been so much gathered dust on the image she had of herself. She would somehow begin anew, be able to see herself clear. Her mother and father were dead, her brother was far off in Oregon, with a wife and sons and daughters sapping even the memory of a sister, and really, she was quite alone; and in this being alone, when she saw the lives of so many about her dismally entangled with the lives of others, crushed by material, moral, emotional responsibilities—the couples burdened with children, the young shackled to the aged, the hale to the halt—she felt almost exultant, glorying in her freedom and irresponsibility. How fortunate that she had no children, no elderly parents, no decrepit relatives, that she had, in fact, nobody but her own sweet self, not even Arthur any more.

At the university she got a job as secretary to the dean of the College of Letters and Sciences, and she got herself an apartment and she settled down. After a year, however, what was to have been a pleasant, unhampered life became somehow, she realized, a monotonous existence. In the quiet of the little apartment, with the café curtains she had made for it, the Klee and Léger prints on the walls she had painted white, and in the gray-hushed and steamy mornings when she trudged to her job, she began to feel oppressed with a great sense of emptiness. Futility, like a colossus, overstrode her world, and the freedom and irresponsibility, for which she had been so grateful, became suddenly a little hollow, or like a dream tarnished,

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by what she did not know. She had skillfully parried the attempts of a married man to inveigle her into an affair, and a graduate student who needed a mother substitute she had indignantly sent packing. The people she had in for cocktails, for buffet suppers, for evening talk over bourbon highballs, they were always the same people, the same faces. And although she did not know them well (Whom do we ever really know? she asked herself what she considered that foolish question), she knew enough about them to find them insufferably boring. Conversation invariably stultified into gossip or inanities, or on the rare occasions when it rose to higher terrain, it rose with none of the leaven of wit or novelty. It all ends in paradox, anyway, became a catch phrase for her when ideas entered her head that unsettled her emotionally, or when emotions trespassed in her heart that were intellectually frightening. And at thirty-two, she began to feel old. I'm old before my time, she bemoaned in comforting self-pity, and she scanned her glass for the telltale signs—the white hairs in the dark scalp, the gossamer lines about the mouth that the lipstick always seemed to make garish. And her eyes seemed less halcyon light, darkened, she thought, by the strain of trying to see her image clearly, and why can't I see, why haven't I understood, she would ask herself with almost a twinge of anguish.

"You need a vacation," Audrey said, as they smoked cigarettes over coffee in the tea room where they frequently had their dinner. And around them she saw the precious boys, the bespectacled, mother-bereft graduate students, the lonely women who made the genteel clatter that seemed to have become the accompaniment to her life. "Why don't you get away for a while?"

"Oh, I couldn't," she said. "I couldn't do that." And acknowledging that something was happening, that the vision had somehow clouded, she said, "It's the winter, the cold. I've always hated the cold."

But she knew that it was more than the cold. It seemed a threshold from which to look back was to regret, and to look forward was to mourn. And the November slid into winter, imperceptibly, each day like the last, and the questions which she could not answer seemed more shrill, as the voice is more shrill in the suddenly silenced room.

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She did not look up when the shadow fell across her typewriter, thinking with habit, he can wait, as she had always made the most importunate wait. And when she looked up finally, there was nothing there to have pricked an expectancy, as these days there seemed always to be nothing, nothing. Merely another student, in a rough tweed coat, the collar still pulled up, the eyes waiting with atavistic patience because the skin of the high-cheeked face was deep brown, the hair cork-screwed black. She saw the long fingers with their purplish nails, a little prehensile, touching her desk, the hand edged with the pinkness of palm, and she said, "Yes?" the tone impersonal, the tone with which she always greeted the most importunate, that which pricked a faint expectancy that, these days, materialized into nothing.

"Could I see the Dean?" he asked.

"Do you have an appointment?" And she noticed that the last typed word on the paper in her machine was misspelled, "decieve," and the transposed letters suffused her suddenly with confusion, with dismay. "If you haven't an appointment, you'll have to wait," and she reached for the eraser. "Dean Harkness is out anyway. I can't say when he'll be back. . . ."

There was no movement from the figure, but she still felt the shadow of it over her desk, over her typewriter, over herself.

"I could wait. . . ."

She looked up and the face, striking her as being singularly impassive, took on an identity of its own, the eyes wide-set, the nose flaring out of its bridgelessness, the lips like slices of fruit in the darkness of the skin. Even when they're young, she thought, they seem ageless. Or are they eternally young?

"What's your name?" she asked, taking up her pencil now and poising it over the scratch pad. "You can wait if you like, but it may even be an hour."

"McKinnon. James McKinnon."

She wrote it down and watched him walk to a chair and seat himself, pulling at his trousers to preserve the crease, and she noticed his polished shoes, and the way he sat, poker-stiff, with the feet planted unremittingly apart and the pink-edged hands cupping almost tensely the knees. Then she looked back at "decieve," and she became unaware of his presence.

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But soon, oppressively, almost as she felt the saffron dusk filtering in through the window, she felt him begin to smother her, and behind the façade of her work, of the stillness of the room, there was this gradual consciousness, this gradual suffocation—him—sitting there in stolid, demanding silence, a monolith that cast its preponderance into the suddenly shrunken, suddenly crowded space. She looked up at him; but the eyes that she expected to be staring at her were directed in contemplation at the window.

"What do you want to see the Dean for?" she asked, resentful that she had made herself speak.

The question did not startle him; and she realized that, although he had not been watching her, he had been willing her to speak. She detected a subtle triumph in his eyes.

"My grades," he told her. "I got to see him about my grades."

"Oh," she said, and went back to her work.

But now that she had spoken, it seemed that her question was tacit permission for him to speak. "I suppose you get a lot of fellows in and out here about their grades and things," he said. "I guess I'm just another cipher to you."

"Cipher?" The word hung in the air, and she tried, puzzled, to grasp it.

"A zero," he said. "Nothing." He paused. "I bet if I ask you now, you couldn't even remember my name without looking at your pad."

She didn't say anything. She plucked a cigarette from the package lying on her desk and slowly lit it. She looked at him, exhaling the first good cloud of smoke. She saw that his eyes had narrowed slightly in appraisal, in challenge.

"McKinnon," she said. "Your name is James McKinnon."

He grinned then. And beneath her anger, she felt a hollowness, almost a defeat in the impulsive reaching of her fingers for the pad, the scissor sound of ripped paper, and the crumbling of the leaf in her moist palm. She tossed the wad at the wastepaper basket.

"That's good," he said. "That's good of you to remember."

She said flatly, unthinking, "It's my job to remember names."

"That's what I mean," he said. "That's exactly what I mean. It's part of your job to remember names."

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She tried to return to her work. But now she noticed that he had slumped a little in his chair, that his legs, limbered a little, were crossed, and his fingers linked themselves loosely in his lap. And now he was watching her, so that she began to feel, more unbearably, his presence. And she rose suddenly to escape it, furious with herself, yet unable precisely to fathom her anger. Insolent, she thought, he's an insolent. . . . But she checked herself quickly because the epithet was distasteful to her, it was a word she never permitted herself to use. It was a word outrageous and vile to her.

"I'll be back in a few minutes," she told him. "If Dean Harkness comes while I'm gone, you wait before you go in. You wait until I come back."

He grinned again. "Yes, ma'am," he said. "I'll wait for you."

Suddenly she realized that she had been wrong, that it wasn't insolence. Why shouldn't he consider himself a cipher, she asked herself. And with a wry and dramatic irony, she paused to reflect. But aren't we all, aren't we all just that—not only they. And she thought that she, too, in the unfulfilled continuity of her days, was another, more poignant zero, because dimly, in the storehouse of recollection there had been something—love, hope, unaccepted passion?—an iridescent thing, but tinsel. And caught there with him, contemplating her, his eyes insolent—no, not insolent, but compassionate now—or was it her own compassion that she saw in them?—with the sulphurous dusk curling desolately, sadly over the campus outside the window, into the room, she felt choked with an incoherent awareness of her plight, as though some strange disparity of the moment, of the boy there, of the still room, of herself, had coalesced to strike her now, at this moment, and fill her involuntarily with tears that would not spill, with bitterness that would not lessen.

"Yes," she repeated, moving toward the door, "you wait till I come back."

But when she returned, he was gone.

She tried not to think of him, but her memory would not forget him. With that peculiar perversity which keeps the trivial, the nonsensical fresh, it kept him with her, so that she would see him on the campus and the recognition would have the impact of the familiar, and she found herself watching the door, almost waiting for him to come back. And there was the paradox, that by describing himself cipher, he was no longer cipher, but an existence that intruded into

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her thoughts like jagged glass, sharp and quick, but the incision was not pain but astonishment.

And he became, as she saw him more often, more fleetingly, a dream; and in the dream, his face was in a cinema close-up, its eyes with an integument of tragedy, its dark-skinned cheeks drawing nearer to her, and his hands—how well she identified his hands!—gradually encircling her face, and with an outer passivity that disguised an inner trepidation (for she was spectator and participant at the same time), she wanted him to kiss her. And although the desperation of desire grimaced her face—no longer young, she saw, alas, no longer young—he would not kiss her. And she would awaken, trembling, biting her pillow, bereft with the sense that he had turned away.

Then she met him. She went to the college cafeteria for early morning coffee, and trying to keep the liquid from slopping into the saucer, she chose her seat arbitrarily. A few chairs away, at the same refectory table, he was sitting alone, his attention no longer focused on the newspaper propped before him, but on her, curious, quizzical. It was almost with panic that she met his eyes, but he gave her no sign of recognition, no indication that he remembered her. He was simply watching a stranger sit near him in a public place. And as he still made no sign, her panic transformed into chagrin, a pique, as though the long familiar had snubbed her. And because she could not bear this humiliation, she asked him quickly for the sugar please, although she did not use sugar, trying to affix her presence with more force upon him. For it was her vanity which insisted, he cannot have forgotten me who remember so well.

But he merely slid the sugar bowl to her, nodding in response to her thanks.

"Did you ever get to see Dean Harkness about your grades?" she asked him.

He evinced no surprise. And again she felt, as she had felt that first time, that he had subtly pressured her into conversation. But, she asked herself, should I have expected surprise, are they ever surprised? Haven't they, perhaps, been drained of a sense of the unexpected, having experienced everything?

"No, ma'am," he said slowly. "I thought better of it. I thought I'd better not try to see him at all."

"Oh," she said. "It couldn't have been important then."

"Important?" He considered the word for a moment and then

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tossed it away. "No, ma'am," he said. "I guess it wasn't important."

She sipped her coffee. Is there nothing more to ask without committing myself, she wondered. And then, remembering vividly the dream, stark as winter, why should I have chosen him, she asked herself, why should it be he.

"It was good of you to remember me," he said. "I was afraid you thought I was rude that day."

"Yes," she admitted. "I remember you," and then, "Rude? Did you mean to be rude?"

"No, ma'am," he said. "I didn't mean to be rude. But I thought you thought I was."

"Yes," she said. "Yes, at first I thought you were rude. . ."

He nodded. "It's always that way with me," he said. He paused. Then he looked at her directly. "With white folks I mean," he added slowly.

But now she must deny it, quickly and kindly, hearing her own voice exclaim, "Oh, no! I didn't feel that way at all!" protesting, deprecating, and her own voice sounding remote and unfamiliar, like the voice of a faulty connection. "I didn't feel that way at all!"

"It does not matter," he said. "I should not have said that at all."

And beneath her discomfort, she was thinking it is his fault, it is their fault, pummeling one with the issue, slapping at one with it as though it were a soiled and brutal rag, their inept weapon. But he had remembered; she was not the stranger taking a seat in a public place. She was not a cipher now; nor he. And she found herself talking to him, listening to him, the words coming easy—"What college are you in?" "Where do you come from?" "Oh, so you play basketball—No, I don't very much follow sports, but. . . "—the words spilling into superficial questions, half-heard answers. For she was mostly observing his face, a face of gravity she thought now, and even handsome, and she was comparing it with the face of her dream; and as she saw his hands—how well she knew those fingers!—she could almost sense their touch about her cheeks, their dry coolness on her flushed face.

And now, more than ever, she watched for him, damming away the question of who was the pursued, who was the pursuer, ignoring the question of why have I chosen him, why is it he. And out of the abundance of trivialities, out of the superfluity of expressions on the almost immobile face—the rare grin, the integument of

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tragedy in the eyes—she constructed, as some pismire must painstakingly construct the precarious home, the fragile illusion in herself, the thing she never believed that she would see. In the "Good morning, ma'am," in the "Allow me this time to pay for the coffee," in the spontaneous laughter that she hoped punctuated her witticism —is he kind to me, she would ask herself, is he merely pitying?—she found something to give substance to her days, the days that pushed her to what end, to what fruitless purpose.

In the mornings she went to the college cafeteria to seek him out, skimming over other faces until she came to his. She sought excuses during the day to hover in the corridors when classes were let out, swept up in the flux of students, scanning faces for his face. In the evening she went to the college cafeteria for dinner instead of the tea room, and she nurtured now the importunity, the faint expectancy; or she walked the streets, searching, hoping. And in the night, in the creaking quiet of her little apartment, she made him a part of her, dreaming while awake a phantasmagoria of situations, incidents, episodes in which there was enacted that which she had never permitted herself to acknowledge that she desired; and now she permitted herself to desire.

And one night, as they walked up the street after a meeting at the cafeteria, she asked him, "Don't you have anywhere to go? Don't you have. . .?" She did not finish the question.

"Don't I have what?" he looked at her curiously.

"A girl friend? Don't you have a girl friend?"

"Back home," he said slowly. "I have a girl friend back home."

"Oh," she said. And then, "It must be lonely for you."

"Lonely?" He had a habit of repeating words, as though he were mulling them over in his mind. "I never think about it," he said. "If I am lonely, it is something I have got used to."

"You study hard," she said, "and then there's your athletics. . . your basketball. I suppose that keeps you busy."

"Yes," he said. "They like me to play basketball. . . .I play a good game. . .but they don't really like me."

"Oh, you're too sensitive," she said. "You're much too sensitive. . . ." She hesitated. "I like you," she said.

She felt his eyes upon her, startled. "That's very kind of you," he said.

And so it became a ritual almost, his walking with her in the

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winter night. But much of what he said, she did not really hear. It is dark, she would be thinking, and he is beside me. Like a shadow that she could not escape, he was beside her. And she would lead him hastily from the bright streets where they could be seen, where she might meet the embarrassing acquaintance, to the labyrinthine walks of the campus and through the deserted, lonely lanes that led away from the town, he hesitant at first, but following her, uncertain, timorous; and she attributed his docility to—she dared not admit it, she desired only to enjoy it as a boon to her vanity. What will happen, where will it lead, she would be thinking during those walks, and the suffocation of his presence was something now that she longed for, something that seemed nourishment.

And one evening, when the winter drizzle hung in vapors on the night, and the dark streets shone like onyx, she took his arm; and then it became a custom for her, when they left the avenues, when the streetlights began to cast long interspersions of blackness and shadow, to take his arm, to draw closer to him as if for protection, as if in friendliness.

She asked him up to her apartment.

"Would it be all right?" She could feel him frown.

"Why?" she professed innocence. "Why can't I ask you up if I like?"

"Your landlady. Maybe she wouldn't like it. People might see me and talk about you. . . . They would gossip."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "What do I care! I've nothing to be ashamed of. I don't care what people think."

He paused. "Are you sure?" he asked. "Are you sure there is nothing to be ashamed of?"

She almost blushed at the tone of his voice. "What do you mean?" She drew away from him. "I don't understand what you mean."

"I only mean," he repeated, "are you sure there is nothing to be ashamed of?" He halted abruptly and looked at her. "Why?" he asked. "Why do you want me to come up?"

She was unprepared for this question. She tried to assuage its impact with a little laugh. "Why?. . .What a silly question!" she said. "Because I consider you my friend," she continued. "Because I ask my friends up to my place. Look," she added, "is there anything wrong with that?"

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He grinned. "No, ma'am," he said. "I'm most glad that you consider me a friend. . . ."

She took his arm again. She did not press the invitation. They are so sensitive, she thought, everything is so difficult for them. Is it any wonder that they are sensitive, that everything is so difficult?

But one night, after she had gone to bed, her doorbell rang, and throwing her robe about her, she went to peer through the crack of the door, and he was standing there in the hall. She was jolted, her heart became a rivet, her blood a hammer. But she would not withdraw the door chain to let him in.

"Oh," she said. "What is it? I couldn't imagine who it was."

He said jauntily, "I took you up on your invitation. You wanted me to come up, didn't you?"

"But. . ." Then, impulsively, she pulled back on the chain and let him in, drawing him out of the light of the hallway. "It's so late," she said. "It's no hour for a visit."

She could smell his clothes then, the odor of stale grease and the rancidness of whisky. "You've been drinking," she said. "What's the matter with you?. . . Are you drunk?"

"No," he told her. "I'm not drunk. I don't get drunk easy."

"Well, then, what do you want? Couldn't you have waited until tomorrow?"

"It's nothing," he said. "I've just come to visit. . .like you said."

"Oh. . ." Her hand leaped to her mouth.

She knew suddenly that it was more than that. And now, with the bulk of him confronting her, she was torn, frightened. Is this what I really wanted, she asked herself, is it this. . .and her mind scampered for an exit, for an escape. But he was there, in the shadow of her room, scrutinizing her with a fixed dispassion, as though aware of her struggle, and waiting, watching, to see what she would do. And under his stare, she was shaken with fear, a sense of terrifying consummation. This is what I wanted, but she could not look into his face, this is what I wanted. . . . And she was engulfed in the hammering excitement, a kind of expectant rapture. And she wanted to reach out now and touch him, but she dared not, breathless.

"Do you want me to stay?" he asked quietly. "Is that what you want?"

"Yes, yes," she breathed quickly. "I want you to stay."

But he made no move. He stood in the shadow with his arms

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against his sides.

"Why?. . . Why do you want me to stay?"

She moved to him and touched his arm. She could feel the rough tweed of his coat, the flesh beneath. "Why do you ask that?" she said. "Why do you always bother with questions?"

He remained immobile, ignoring her hand.

"I would like to know," he said. "Why have you bothered with me?"

She did not answer. Why, she asked herself, wrestling in wonderment with the old question, why have I bothered with him, why have I chosen him, why is it he.

"Is it," he asked, "because with me, it would be safe, because with me you would not risk anything. . .a white woman like you? Could you walk the streets with me proudly, in the daylight, and show that I am your lover? Could you do that? Or is it because with me it would not matter, because I'm a useful nobody. . .a lover only, not a person?"

She felt his hand on her arm, shaking her. "Why don't you answer? Are you afraid? Are you ashamed? Is it that you want a lover only. . .and without any love?"

"No," she said, straining to release his grip from her. "No. Let me go. . . .You're hurting me. . . .Please let me go."

"You're afraid now," he said. "Now you're afraid. There's just the both of us, and I know. . .I know about you, I know how you mean to use me, and you're afraid what I might do."

"No. . .no. . ."

He loosened her arm and pushed her from him. "You," he choked in contempt. "You damn bitch. . . You don't want to give anything. You want only to take. You don't know how to give. . . ."

"I do," she cried. "I do. Oh, I do. . .I do."

"What?" he asked. "What would you give?" He watched her carefully, waiting.

She did not answer. She hid her face in her hands. "I would," she said, almost weeping. "Oh I would. . ."

But he did not wait. She heard the soft click of the door, and when she looked up, he was gone. She sank down on the floor and rocking herself, she wept. He would have loved me, she kept saying in anguish, he would have loved me. . . .

In a little while, she got up and put the chain back on the door.

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THE CRISIS IN COMMUNISM

THE REVOLT OF THE HUNGARIAN WRITERS*

On September 17, 1956, some 200 Hungarian writers held a National Congress at which they outlined a new program for their Union and, at the same time, elected a new executive committee. The Congress was marked by a passionate spirit of intransigence of which only a few echoes reached the Western press. Overriding the recommendations formulated—with considerable tact and even respect, it must be admitted—by the Party representative, Jules Kallai, a former Titoist and journalist of the Resistance who had recently been rehabilitated and named chairman of the Central Committee's Department of Cultural Affairs, the writers took a virtually unanimous position in favor of the complete autonomy of their Union *vis-à-vis* the Party and government. And in order to implement promptly the meaning of such autonomy, they elected a new executive committee from which were eliminated all Stalinist, Ràkosist, "sectarian," and dogmatist writers. They excluded all those who, through the years of the Terror (1949-1952), had manifested a special zeal in denouncing their more or less heretical colleagues: Aladàr Tamàs, who, in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Writers' Union (not elected, by the way, but imposed from above by the Party leadership), had behaved like a little Stalinist Caesar, treating the writers like so many subalterns, not deigning to see them personally but communicating with them through his private secretary; the incurably mediocre Alexander Gergely, who had satisfied his vindictive feelings by drawing up indictment after indictment against confrères so unlucky as to be guilty of originality or intellectual honesty; Joseph Darvas, novelist, Minister of Propaganda, and in charge of censorship; and others. Even the former editor of the *Literary Gazette,* Béla Illés, a colonel in the Soviet Army and a picturesque fellow, not without talent, who was the most reasonable of the clan of onetime

* This article, by a Hungarian writer now living in Paris, was written just before the outbreak of the revolution in Hungary. The author could not have anticipated the turn of events the past weeks would take, and the fate of many of the individuals he mentions is now uncertain, but his article is, so far as we know, the first detailed account to appear in English of the role played by Hungarian intellectuals in their country's bid for freedom.—THE EDITORS.

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Moscow émigrés connected with the local tyrant, Mathias Ràkosi, was excluded from the executive committee. On the other hand, admitted in a body, along with heterodox Communists (Laszlo Benjamin, Tibor Déry, Jules Hay, Lajos Konya), were non-Communist libertarians, socialists, and independents: Paul Ignotus, the most brilliant essayist and critic in the country; the great poet and proletarian novelist, Louis Kassak; E. Kolozsvàri-Grandpierre, a descendant of Huguenot exiles, who contemplates the astonishing complications of Hungarian reality with an amused skepticism; and nationalist-populists whose racist ideology, tinged with Marxism and oriented to the cult of the peasant, recalls that of the Russian *Esser* at the turn of the century: Jules Illyés, who is in process of raising a poetic structure that is worthy and original, despite the freakish political gusts blowing through it; the uneven autodidact Péter Veres, a writer booted and spurred, continually carrying on an armed flirtation with intellectuals; even Lorinc Szabo, who is perhaps the most gifted poet in contemporary Hungary, but whose street-corner anti-Semitism and decadent's susceptibility to the attractions of open brutality led him to range himself alongside the Nazis in 1938; and Laszlo Németh, the Hungarian Drieu la Rochelle, a polygraph of confused nationalist, cosmopolitan, and Spenglerian tendencies, but at the same time the incisive chronicler of the Magyar middle class, to which he belongs.

I give this lengthy roll call of names of somewhat barbarous resonance, of which two or three at most do not ring strangely in Western ears, to show the diversity of this new "Directorate" of Hungarian writers, within which all intellectual tendencies were henceforward to be represented, save one: that of the Stalinist inquisitors. It was a kind of coalition government, based on a "defensive alliance" to which the old Communist Jules Hay alluded at the Congress, as having been "concluded among Hungarian writers regardless of political or philosophical divergencies for the purpose of mutually assuring freedom of speech, freedom to tell the truth." The alliance was directed against the Party—to be exact, against the ideological monopoly claimed and exercised by the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

Even before the Congress, however, the Hungarian writers, led by the oldest Communist veterans among them (this fact must be emphasized: non-Communists have been followers not moving spirits of these events), had rejected the authority of the Party not only in literary matters, but also in the domain of organization. They had practically killed the censorship and made good their claim that literature is something too serious to be entrusted to bureaucrats.

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The origin of the Hungarian writers' revolt goes back to June of 1953, to a time when the Hungarian Communist Party, under the direction of Imre Nagy, had somewhat precipitately struck out on the de-Stalinization path. On July 4, 1953, Imre Nagy drew up a balance sheet of five years of terror, with a calm and ferocious precision that left the Parliament breathless. He affirmed what everybody knew but what nobody till then had dared breathe—that the governmental mechanism had jammed, that the Party was completely cut off from the people, discredited even in the eyes of the working classes, to say nothing of the peasantry and intelligentsia; that, moreover, the first, the only thing to do under the circumstances, if one wished to avert upheavals "on the Berlin model" and win back the confidence of the country, was to inaugurate a policy of reforms aimed at putting an end to arbitrary restrictions and illegal acts on the part of the police, improving the standard of living by applying the brake to super-industrialization, and doing away with propaganda whose purpose was a continuous and massive falsification of the truth.

Now, the effect of this amazing speech, this *mea culpa* of the Party uttered by one of its chiefs (known within the Party, however, as a long-time opponent of Ràkosi's policies), was nowhere as electrifying as among Communist and philo-Communist writers. It is easy to see why. These writers, among them some of the best in the country (Tibor Déry, Jules Hay, Istvan Orkeny), had, during the years 1949-1952, been subjected to rigorous indoctrination by the intellectual bosses of the Party (notably the grand and inexorable inquisitor, that damned soul, Joseph Révai) in an attempt to mold them to the Zhdanovian norms of artistic creation. Most of them had been formed by a Marxism impregnated with Western culture; though their party cards and convictions were Communist, their artistic temperaments were personalist and somewhat anarchist, their minds analytical and critical. It was almost asking the impossible to expect them to transform themselves into Aragons or Fédines, to embrace, under coercion, that technique which consists in telling the grossest lies in accents of the most ingenuous truth, in throwing the mantle of "what is obvious" over what is utterly unbelievable, in accusing those known to be innocent while defending forgers or monsters of criminality.

Their "schooling" had begun with the Rajk affair. The day after the infamous verdict, which had stirred up Western opinion, Tamas Nagy, a writer-functionary of the Central Committee, directed an appeal to the writers in the *Szabad Nép*. This appeal had the ring of an order: "Fellow Magyar writers, let us denounce Rajk to the people

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for the adventurer that he is, before the Western writers, with their 'humanist' way of looking at things, make a hero out of him. . . . Let us show up this grotesque so that even future generations will turn away from him in horror."

For numerous writers who remembered the Moscow Trials of 1936-1938,[1] to believe in the accusations hurled at Rajk amounted to committing a kind of moral hara-kiri, akin to offering their brains up for sacrifice. How they envied the non-Communists, whom it cost nothing to believe—and why not?—that the Communist Saint-Just was the most infamous of traitors! The reactionaries were jubilant, the opportunists put on a great show of zeal, while the Communists—I refer to the sincere ones—were required to work a miracle, and did. They believed, because "the Party cannot be wrong."[2] They believed in a spirit of self-flagellation. They entered into the cult of Stalin as though into a purification bath, after having shed the soiled garments of bourgeois culpability. The cuirass of their faith, the *credo quia absurdum,* became the distinctive sign henceforward setting them apart from the rabble of in-and-outers whose nationalist or cosmopolitan, formalist or naturalist, subjectivist or objectivist deviations, they occasionally joined in denouncing. They submitted with infinite good will to the spiritual direction of Révai, the supreme custodian of the laws of Marxo-Lenino-Stalinist art. One no longer wrote for the public: one wrote for the *Akademia Ucca,* Révai's headquarters. One wrote to please the Party. *Ad majorem gloriam.* . . . One lied. One lied in heroic accents.

Then came the moment when all these sacrifices, all this heroic effort perversely directed at the destruction of their own consciences, were revealed from on high as having been not only vain, but positively

1 I am told that my friend Andor Németh, a very subtle and lucid man, and author of one of the best studies on Kafka, had listened to the radio rebroadcast of the Rajk trial with a transcript of the Bukharin trial in his hand.

2 These were the last words flung at me, on the subject of Rajk, by a very dear friend, that prince of simpletons, the poet André Havas, former Secretary of the Hungarian Legation in Paris. Recalled to Hungary after the arrest of Rajk, Havas was arrested and tortured to death. I have recently learned that his teeth were broken off one by one; that the son of General Farkas, Vladimir, the Number 1 sadist of the police, pissed in his mouth (the "ideological specialty" of this Stalinist, it appears); and when Havas, not understanding exactly what was wanted of him nor able to bring himself to believe his Communist comrades could be subjecting him to such atrocities, went out of his mind, they continued to beat him until he died. The writers of Hungary are now planning a national funeral for Havas, the very man who kept repeating indefatigably, while I was demonstrating point by point the utter baselessness of the charges brought against Rajk: "The Party cannot be wrong; nothing counts but loyalty to the Party."

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mischievous. "You would have done the Party a greater service by refusing to lie, by telling the truth, by not turning your backs on the people," they were told. One can imagine the sickness and rage provoked by these words of common sense.

Those who most quickly recovered their presence of mind were the small opportunists, alert, cunning, facile of pen—they shall be nameless. They entered upon a truth-telling race. So the Party wanted criticism! Why certainly, all it wanted. A competition began to see who could hurl the greatest possible number of disagreeable truths at the heads of the leaders, who appeared to be on their way out. Other, better-informed, opportunists appealed for moderation, warning against excesses in the "unfreezing" operation. They cocked a weather eye in the direction of Russia where Ilya Ehrenbourg had just received a rap on the knuckles for doing so much thinking.

Nevertheless "Operation Unfreeze" went on apace. Encouraged by Imre Nagy, the writers went to the country, brought themselves up to date on the situation, reported on it in verse, in newspaper articles, and in fiction. Others rummaged through their desks for works written during the Terror. Orkény recovered his gusty satirical laughter of an earlier day, Konya published his *On the Great Road,* a poem in which he complained particularly about the Russians having carried off, without compensation, the aluminum wealth of the country (somewhat original subject matter for poetry).

Factions began to form: the Stalinists, headed by Sandor Gergely and under Ràkosi's protection, recovered, after some months of silence, their aplomb; they were opposed by a more powerful group composed of "reformist" Communists, backed by "Populists." The Party leadership intervened several times in quarrels between these factions, preaching a middle of-the-road policy for writers, and announcing its readiness to grant them "a greater liberty" on condition that they did not impair the prestige of the Party, but placed it in a perspective of "having overcome its errors."

But how was this directive to be applied at the level of the particular, to each individual work? How was the invincible march of the Party toward glory to be shown, for example, in a love song or a sob? "You can't substitute love for the class struggle," Révai had written in 1952. Exactly. And if one suddenly felt like shedding a tear, one ran the risk of being called a pessimist and a decadent bourgeois. For the Party censors all personal emotion smacked suspiciously of deviationism. The Party leadership might be induced by circumstances to accept "freedom" of literature in *theory,* but such freedom on the plane of

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practice would always appear to them extravagant and dangerous.

They were right, it seemed, for no sooner had the reins been loosened than the writers and journalists began to denounce certain privileges enjoyed by the "high aristocracy" of State and Party. The anxiety of the bureaucracy before this "spirit of anarchy" fostered by writers was expressed with a certain verve by Joseph Darvas, one-time novelist of peasant life and a philo-Communist, who had replaced the sick Joseph Révai as chief of the propaganda apparatus. Darvas denounced the writers, who, while seeming to confine their attacks to particulars, "are denigrating and vilifying the whole Party achievement in the construction of socialism, and undermining the authority of the leaders."

This counter-attack by the Stalinist bureaucracy developed strength, thanks to the consolidation of Mathias Ràkosi's position brought about by Khrushchev's direct intervention. When Imre Nagy was driven out of the premiership and the Party directorate for alleged deviationism, the reformist writers lost their main political prop. Orthodoxy appeared to have triumphed up and down the line. And it was in threatening accents that it reaffirmed "the absolute right of the Party to take charge of cultural life."

Nevertheless, the threats fell for once on deaf ears. For a very simple reason: the writers realized that, while the new line formulated by Khrushchev called for struggle against deviationists, it also forbade Ràkosi to take *administrative* and *police* action against the "heretics." It was at this point (May, 1955) that Jules Hay, Tibor Déry, and the young novelist, Thomas Aczél, the only Hungarian Stalin Prize winner, took over the leadership of a struggle against "intellectual bureaucracy," that is, against Party control over cultural activities. Their fight took a more desperate turn about October, 1955, when the first findings of the inquiry (which the Party apparatus had tried to sabotage) into the Rajk affair began to be known. For many writers, the discovery of the truth, that is, of the fact the 1949 trial had been a "lie from beginning to end," came as a terrible shock, leading to despair, self-torture, and even nervous collapse. From that crisis, as one of them, Otto Major, wrote, was born "the moral unity of the writers, based on a solemn commitment never to lie again, never to serve an inhuman purpose . . . to tell the truth. . . ."

The truth? The word itself has a doubtful ring in the ears of the dialecticians of the bureaucracy, for whom it is so easily confounded with untruth, which serves their interests (or seems to). The moral

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crisis just undergone by many writers seemed to them only an evidence of a petty-bourgeois hysteria. And when one of the young poets of the *Literary Gazette* circle, the proletarian Laszlo Benjamin, was imprudent enough to attack in an acridly satirical poem the sacrosanct person of Ràkosi himself, all hell broke loose. Censorship officials ordered the confiscation of the *Literary Gazette,* and its editor-in-chief, Georges Hamos, was removed for "displaying weakness in his dealings with writers."

This was only the beginning. The Secretary-General of the Writers' Union, Sandor Erdei, guilty of having praised the above-mentioned poet Benjamin, was replaced by the ambitious and detested Aladàr Tamàs. Moreover, the Censorship forbade the publication of Konya's *Journal*—a superb piece of reporting on the desolation of the Hungarian countryside—and withdrew from the repertory of the National Theatre not only a play by Jules Hay, but also Imre Madàch's *The Tragedy of Man,* a national classic, written after the crushing of the 1848 Revolution. Recently, it has blocked the publication of a long-promised series of books by outstanding non-Communist writers like Tersanszky, Kassak, Remenyik, etc.

These contemptuous measures, inspired by Ràkosi, were the last straw. At a meeting of the Writers' Union executive committee, on November 18, 1955, there was a scandalous outburst. Six members of the Executive and three of the Secretariat, all of them Party members, refused to work with the Stalinist Tamàs and resigned. At the same time, one of them, Tibor Déry, drew up, and had an overwhelming majority of his confrères sign, a memorandum addressed to the Central Committee, protesting against "violation of the Union's autonomy" as well as against manifold acts of interference on the part of authorities in the lives of writers and artists, and calling for "a complete break with prevailing undemocratic methods of control which paralyze the cultural life of the country and are destroying the authority and influence of the Party."

This document—the first real evidence of opposition in Hungary—when transmitted to the Central Committee at the end of 1955, at first stunned the Ràkosi government, then moved it to a frenzy of indignation. Ràkosi, determined to put down this "lackeys' rebellion," rammed a stern "resolution" through the Central Committee and had it inserted, on December 10, in the *Literary Gazette*. It pilloried Tibor Déry and four of his friends for their "anti-Party and anti-popular views," accusing them of having launched a "frontal attack" against the Party. This arch-Zhdanovian resolution lumped together art for art's sake, apolitical poetry, pseudo-revolutionary anarchism, symbolism, and so

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on, all for the purposes of attack. Déry, taxed with having committed the worst of crimes, namely, the organization of a fraction within the Party, was at the same time called upon to reflect, and to submit. Several minor writers, called together by the Central Committee and intimidated by Ràkosi's wrath, did in fact retract their signatures. But Déry, Hay, Zoltàn Zelk held firm and refused to be browbeaten. Fearful of alienating the "liberal" wing (notably Mikoyan) in Moscow, Ràkosi was hesitant to throw them in jail. Now, a hesitant tyrant is one marked for public vengeance.

Meanwhile, the 20th Congress took place, with its partly public, partly secret demolition of the Stalin myth, the cult of Big Brother, terrorist techniques, and administrative autocracy. Everybody in Hungary, and above all the writers, interpreted the resolutions of this Congress as a condemnation of Ràkosi, a justification of Imre Nagy, an encouragement from on high to clean up and democratize public life by a clear-cut recognition of realities.

From that moment on, the writers' struggle against the censorship was transformed into a wider struggle against the dictatorship. They demanded that the nation as a whole be given a chance to be heard. Ràkosi's effort to take over de-Stalinization was greeted by the Writers' Union with an explosion of wrath. And when Ràkosi, between two sentences on the economic situation, "rehabilitated" Rajk in a cavalier aside, dumping all responsibility for the 1949 trial on Gabor Peter, a Hungarian sub-Beria, the writer Sandor Lukàcsy rose at a stormy meeting of the Union and shouted: "That explanation is worthy of a Judas." When some of the Stalinists protested, the hall was thrown into pandemonium; and the representative of the Central Committee, who was in the chair, was thrown into such a panic by this mutinous tumult that he adjourned the meeting and had the hall cleared.

Three days later the writers met again. (The Party leadership was unable to prevent these meetings, as Moscow had "advised" the Party brethren to foster widespread discussion of the decisions of the 20th Congress.) A representative of the Central Committee, Marton Horvath, opened the session with the announcement that Lukàcsy had been expelled from the Party because of insulting remarks he had made against Ràkosi. A number of writers—among them, Péter Veres, the President of the Union—protested violently. Horvath proposed on behalf of the Party leadership the election of a new Secretary, one Csabai, whose name many of the writers had never even heard before. The proposal was voted down, 100-3. Then Thomas Aczél took the floor, expressing the "utter lack of confidence of the Hungarian intelligentsia in Ràkosi," and called for his resignation.

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Some days later, the Petöfi Club, which is a Communist student and intellectual group with headquarters in downtown Budapest, invited several of the insurgent writers to give a public exposition of their point of view. This proved a sure way of making their meetings a success; they began to attract increasingly large audiences. During this same period, the tone of the *Literary Gazette* was becoming bolder every week. What assured the writers and their *Gazette* of a sympathetic audience was not so much their theoretical affirmations of the utility—for the Party—of "truth," or their denunciations of "socialist realism," now completely buried, but their courageous stand against the authorities. Déry and his friends were in fact the first Hungarians for many years to conduct themselves as though utterly unafraid, to *talk like free men*. Yet Ràkosi was still very much there, his police apparatus was intact and under the direction of the torturer, Vladimir Farkas. The "objective conditions" of fear were all still present. Déry and his colleagues pretended to be unaware of their existence. Each new issue of the *Literary Gazette* was in the nature of an event. Issue after issue destroyed a taboo, demolished a prohibition. Reality had suddenly ceased to be mute. The message of the writers: Speak! Do as we do, out with it! Air your grievances! . . . reached ever wider areas among the intelligentsia.

Toward the end of June, especially after the Poznan riots, the Secretariat of the Party completely lost control over the Petöfi Club, where the regular debates were becoming increasingly more agitated. One meeting of the Club, on the 27th of June, drew more than 6,000 people, who booed and threatened the representatives of the Party Secretariat.

Mathias Ràkosi then staged one last attempt to save his position and re-establish Party unity under his rule. He called a meeting of the Central Committee and on the 30th of June had it adopt—in the face of the reluctance and hostility of an increasing number of Committee members—a motion of censure against the agitators. Two Union ringleaders, Déry and Tardos, were expelled from the Party; action against the others was limited to severe disciplinary measures. Next, Ràkosi's emissaries descended on the Budapest factories and those of other industrial centers in order to lay the sense of the June 30 resolution before the workers. These emissaries tried to represent the rebellious writers and intellectuals as "agents of the bourgeoisie" who were attempting to restore capitalism. It was not the first time Ràkosi had set about exploiting the traditional anti-intellectualism of the proletariat while repre-

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senting himself as the defender of the working class. But this time the maneuver miscarried. Some echoes of the social and political demands made by the writers had somehow already reached the workers. Harangued by the Central Committee emissaries, the workers insisted they wanted "to look into the matter a bit," and they demanded that texts of the speeches by the incriminated Déry and Tardos be communicated to them. Ràkosi, unable to mobilize the faithful, failed to create a favorable climate for the police measures he thought he could still take against the authors of the disturbances.

The Soviets, it appears, advised him in the meantime to make himself scarce. On July 17, Ràkosi fell from power, as the result of a compromise worked out between Stalinists who deserted his cause (Gerö) and the more moderate and pedestrian wing of "rehabilitated Titoists." Immediately, the reshuffled Party leadership published a resolution announcing its desire to accelerate the process of liberalization. The new chief of the Cultural Department of the Central Committee, Jules Kallai, politely invited the writers—"now that the main thing has been accomplished"—to return to their own field: creation, and to leave politics to the professionals.

The writers responded to this appeal with a certain reserve. Believing rightly that the fall of the "Idol" was their handiwork, and knowing that their audience in the country was growing, and that in any case they were more popular if not more competent than the leaders of the Party, they began to prepare for a National Congress by way of emphasizing their independence. They went to the unprecedented length of affirming that they stood ready to take over "cultural affairs in this period of hiatus" while dealing with the Party *on a footing of equality*! "They tell us: bring your debates to an end, just write some good books," declared the poet Gèza Kèpes, the Secretary *pro tem* of the Writers' Union. "Our answer is: even while we were debating violently, we wrote some pretty good things and we shall continue to do so. But debate, participation in public affairs, is not only the right but the duty of all citizens—writers included—in a socialist democracy."

Thus, the Writers' Congress held in September, which we have mentioned above, was not only a professional convention but also a kind of revolutionary assembly of Estates-General. Kallai there took it upon himself to expound the "revised" point of view of the Party leadership in matters cultural. The struggle of the writers against "dogmatism," against "administrative direction" of intellectual life, was, he said in essence, justified. Consequently, most of the measures taken against "factious" writers had been declared void. Still others would

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be similarly revoked provided the "blameworthy" ones, like Déry or Tardos, would make some gesture acknowledging that they had "sinned against Party discipline." Other concessions were dangled before the Union's eyes: authorization to publish three new reviews (of which one was to be on aesthetics, under Lukàcs), increased emoluments, and grants for study abroad. On the other hand, Kallai called their attention to that "error" which consisted in going beyond the Party to appeal to a kind of national consensus. "National union, as well as unification of literature, can only be based on the strength and indestructible unity of the Party." Which meant: discipline first, democracy later.

The spokesman for the writers, while paying homage to the "good intentions of the new Communist leadership," went on in his answer to Kallai to uphold uncompromisingly their demand for absolute freedom of intellectual life, for autonomy for the Writers' Union. As we have seen, the action taken by the Congress was in that direction.

However paradoxical this whole experience (and however lasting), the Union of Hungarian Writers after its Congress constituted a state within the State. Not only its literary but also its political and ideological activities were free of all direction from the Party. In fact, the writers, whose audience kept growing (the *Literary Gazette* is the most widely read journal in the country, and *Ludas Matyi*—the Hungarian *Canard Enchainé*—which is equally a spokesman for "de-Stalinization" has a circulation of 410,000 copies, an impressive figure in a country of ten million people), *were* that "second party" which the Party refused to authorize. Although the Communist file leaders in the Union considered themselves, perhaps sincerely, the "marching," the Leninist wing of the Party, the Union itself was a National Front in miniature, an assemblage that reflected far more faithfully than the different factitious mass organizations created by the Party (Peace Movement, Patriotic Popular Front, etc.) the *real country,* this new Hungary which is working-class, intellectual, and peasant, without capitalists, without big land owners but to which the intelligentsia gives its tone.

Hungarian writers at that point spoke to their rulers on a footing of equality. If the organ of the Central Committee, *Szabad Nép,* ventured to reproach them, they rejected the reproaches with a disdain founded on certainty: the people are with us. The Party leadership was as though mesmerized by this unexpected opposition. We have here a new *social* fact which, as such, deserves to be noted. To be sure, the tendency to "artistic" or intellectual autonomy has never been totally absent from the Communist world; but this tendency for the first time, in Hungary, took the form of an organized rebellion with considerable propaganda means at its disposal: press, radio, Petöfi Club, etc.

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The revolt of Hungarian left-wing writers—and the no less significant one of Polish intellectuals—would seem to justify an optimistic forecast made at a time when eastern Socialism seemed to be sinking lower and lower into depths of inhumanity, of terror, both physical and intellectual. As the tragic survivors of the shipwreck of so many received ideas, of so many utterly needless sacrifices, the Communist writers and intellectuals of Eastern Europe find themselves confronted by a truly crushing task: the rethinking of socialism in the light of its successes and failures, while balancing the ravages of Stalinism against the technical and scientific progress of the last several decades; and the restitution for socialism of those moral, generous, and humane principles which the Stalinist "realists" threw overboard.

The old Hungarian Communist Jules Hay, in an article published on the eve of the September Congress which I would gladly cite in its entirety, it is so beautifully written and courageous, said:

Yes, we call for complete freedom for literature. The most complete, the most illimitable freedom conceivable among men living in civilized society. That is, we want nothing to be forbidden the writer that the laws do not uniformly forbid *all* citizens. Naturally, the writer is no more authorized than anyone else to incite to murder, arson, theft, brigandage, overthrow of the Republic, racial discrimination, etc. . . . But he must be free (like any other citizen, for that matter) to tell the truth without restriction; to criticize anybody and anything whatsoever; to be melancholy; to be in love; to meditate on death; to believe in the omnipotence of God; to deny His existence; to express doubts as to the accuracy of certain statistics relative to the Plan; to think along non-Marxist lines; to think like a Marxist even when his ideas developed in that way do not happen to correspond to officially established truths; not to love certain rulers; to realize that the city is tumbling down for want of repairs; to love Stalinville or not to love it; to defend humanity even in situations about which less sensitive spirits have been unable to see that there is anything inhuman; to have an original style; and so on, and so on. . . .

A salient fact: the Communist Hay, and with him, save for very rare exceptions, all the Communist writers of Hungary, were defending freedom not only for themselves but for non-Marxists as well, for everybody: spiritualists, Catholics, idealists, anarchists, individualists, formalists, pessimists, decadents, nationalists. . . . And if they were asked the reason for this surprising show of "liberalism," they called on their own past experience. "In helping the bureaucracy to muzzle non-Communist writers, we prepared our own servitude," they said. "The best among us," said Hay in a speech to the Congress, "suffered in this climate of mendacity," in this climate of empty, ostentatious optimism where

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the supreme duty of writers consisted in spreading the myth of the regime's popularity and the Party's phantom successes. "We have paid dearly for our lies: we saw our productivity falter, the level of our work sink, while drifting farther and farther away from the philosophic foundations of our literary existence: Marxism-Leninism.

"I have been a Marxist for nearly forty years," Hay cried out to the Congress. "Marxist philosophy was the basis of my thought, the guiding force of my life. But in these years, the psychic tortures of the recent past have taught me that no philosophy, however just, can be relied on as an *automatic* safeguard against errors, aberrations, and even against crime and dishonor. Like everyone else, the Marxist too must carry on, day after day, his struggle for the truth."

In this stirring confession and avowal, the word "truth" appeared as the great rallying cry of insurgent Hungarian writers, taking on an exalted, almost mystical tone. But let there be no mistake. It signified for the best of them a real effort at demystification, at emancipation from propaganda. It marked the point of junction of a thinking elite with popular sentiment. Hence, the revolt of the Magyar writers carries a moral pathos that commands our respect.

Francois Fejto

NIGHT AND DAY IN WARSAW*

Stalinism aimed at transforming literature into journalism and propaganda, and the fact is that in the course of the last months literature has turned into journalism and propaganda. But it is journalism and propaganda directed against Stalinism. Stalinism aimed at "politicizing" our youth, and the fact is that our youth has now become a political force. But it is a political force directed against Stalinism. Stalinism called on the working class to be alert; the workers have now become alert in their determination not to permit a return of Stalinism.

What was a fiction has become a reality. Not by one stroke! Stalinism—as Wiktor Woroszylski wrote correctly—was violence done to economy, and to human thoughts and feelings; but Stalinism was also violence done to words. It called black white, and white black. It con-

* This article, printed here for its documentary interest, as indicative of the new tone in the Polish press, appeared in *Przeglad Kulturalny* ("Cultural Review"), Warsaw, October 25-31, 1956. The author is one of Poland's leading literary critics.—THE EDITORS.

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fused the meanings of the words freedom and slavery, loyalty and treason, revolution and counter-revolution. Even the term "socialism" was so distorted by Stalinism, that many of us came to believe that all it implied was a very violent and very costly system of industrializing economically backward countries. Many long months, not just the last dramatic weeks, and the fateful Friday night,[1] were required to restore their real meanings to words, so that they no longer stuck in our throats, and so that the words, *socialism, democracy, sovereignty* and *national pride,* could once again ring out in clear tones. And that is why that Friday night, the night during which no one slept in Warsaw, will pass into the history of Poland.

During that night we were not alone. Nor was the sound core of our party leadership alone. I am convinced that our comrades knew this well. And during that difficult and bitter night, this knowledge surely gave them additional strength, courage and resolve.

We still experience enormous inner resistance as we pronounce those great words. No wonder! So many times they were twisted to mean the exact opposite. So many times they lied. Only now have they been sanctioned by history. We must guard against their further abuse. But there are things that must be said. That fateful night has revealed that the real master of the country and of Warsaw is the revolutionary working class, that the youth has rediscovered a common language with the workers, and that hope for true socialism is still alive in the better part of our intelligentsia.

Today we can tell ourselves quite explicitly why we experienced Poznan as a personal tragedy. The process of renewal in Poland progressed very slowly. Each step forward had to be fought for and was made with enormous difficulty. The process was initiated from the bottom, never the other way around. The leadership gave ground, it did not lead. It was continually on the defensive. Each change came a few weeks too late—the amnesty, the rehabilitation, the new attitude toward the former underground, the first economic reforms, partial freedom of speech. The old Communists slowly shook off the toxins of exhaustion and despair. We were fed only small doses of the truth about the crimes of Stalinism and the critical economic situation. And yet the process of renewal went ahead. Gleams of hope flashed, backs were straightened, humps were disappearing. The press gradually began to regain the people's confidence. Journalism came of age. For the first time our newspapers and weeklies began to pay attention to the

1 October 19, 1956, the night of Khrushchev's descent on Warsaw in an attempt to browbeat the Central Committee of the Polish Communists and to halt the process of democratization.

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East and to the West. They became the leaven of new thinking in our own camp and in all Communist parties.

But this was not the most important thing. The most important thing was the coming together of the party and the people. This process, which had been brutally interrupted in 1949, was resumed. And then came Poznan.

It was as though we had been hit over the head with a club. The tragedy was not merely the fact that blood was shed. Many of us lost the hope that it would be possible to bridge the gulf between the leadership and the people; the gulf seemed to reopen, and this time for good. But the despair proved unjustified. Poznan had a sobering effect. Actually the Poznan tragedy gave a new impetus to the struggle for socialist democratization. The bitter lesson was: One more Poznan and it will be too late.

The wall separating Party members and those who belonged to no party crumbled. The division that followed was along different lines: what mattered was the attitude toward Stalinism and its Polish variety. We have heard a thousand tirades about the struggle of the new against the old, but this time, in the course of the last few months, we have actually experienced this struggle. It was a struggle for the Party and its new leadership. But to the same extent it was a struggle for Poland and for true friendship with the Soviet Union and the people's democracies—a friendship on the basis of freedom, equality, and mutual respect.

In this struggle the Polish Left was reborn, not in name only, and not in the mere sense of a party badge. It all began with "evening talks of close friends." There followed many hour-long discussions within organizations—the first discussions to which no one had to be dragged. And then meetings of workers and the youth spread over Poland like a revolutionary fire.

Many of us, men of little faith, thought that Stalinist education had corrupted our youth. We had often written that this youth was cynical and without ideals, and among ourselves we whispered that it was reactionary. That was false! The overwhelming majority of our youth are equally ardent in their patriotism and pitiless in the face of all forms of hypocrisy. But it is a youth loyal to the fundamental ideas of socialism. The fact is that in these difficult moments the youth sought support among the factory workers. The heart of Warsaw beat in the same rhythm at the Polytechnic School and at the Zeran automobile plant.

In the course of these last months all the masks have dropped.

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People showed their real faces, regardless of the party cards they had in their pockets. We have often written about reaction, but for a long time we were unable to give it its real name. In the same Polytechnic School, where Saturday night nearly thirty thousand young people of Warsaw sang, at the end of a meeting lasting many hours, the *International* and the Polish anthem, Boleslaw Piasecki[2] several years ago addressed his storm-troopers inciting them to anti-Jewish pogroms. We have heard that voice again. On the eve of the most important events that have taken place in the last years, the voice threatened the patriotic Left with the proclamation of martial law if the national discussion were to be transformed into action. But the Warsaw working class imposed a martial law of its own. It was enough to go out into the streets on that Friday night to know who was master in Warsaw. Working-class Warsaw was on the alert, and its voice was heard at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee.

Jan Kott

2 Ex-fascist and anti-Semite, captured by the Russians; was persuaded to work for them; returned to Poland after the war; became head of the Communist-front Catholic Progressive group "Pax".

FRENCH INTELLECTUALS SAY NO

"The events of the past weeks have raised burning questions of conscience for Communists that neither the Party's Central Committee nor the Party organ have helped to resolve. An incredible poverty of information, a veil of silence, and more or less deliberate ambiguities have upset Communists' minds, leaving them helpless, open to all the insinuations of the enemy. . . ."

The individuals who signed this protest, with the request that a special congress of the Party be called, are anything but obscure. One of the signers is Pablo Picasso, whose fame as "the master of the dove" has reached the remotest Manchurian village; another is the psychologist Henri Wallon, professor at the Collège de France. True enough, the latter has already thought better of his stand—and he will not be the only one. No sooner had the "Manifesto of the Ten" been denounced by the Party as a conspiracy of an organized fraction, than he publicly apologized and assured Maurice Thorez of his unswerving loyalty.

One of the Party's leading juridical authorities, Professor Léon

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Caen, who looked upon all the Moscow, Budapest, and Prague trials as expressions of a truly progressive and truly democratic legality, could not swallow the crushing of the Hungarian uprising by Russian armor—and as a result he was suspended for six months and "publicly censured" by the Party. Similarly the *enfants terribles* of the Party, the talented writers Claude Roy and Roger Vailland, were reprimanded for their failure to understand that the Hungarian people's democracy is today being defended by the people's friends, the Russians, against Hungarians all of whom are enemies of the people. A young philosopher, Francis Rolland, teacher at the Lycée Voltaire, was expelled for having published an article in *L'Express* attacking the French Party leadership as an ossified Stalinist "fraction." The fact that he had concluded his article with an expression of his unflinching loyalty to the Soviet Union was of no avail.

Nine months ago, Francis Rolland's colleague at the Lycée Voltaire, Pierre Hervé, editor-in-chief of *L'Humanité* and for many years a Party favorite, was expelled for having played the trump card of Soviet de-Stalinization and liberalization against French Stalinism in his book *La Révolution et les Fétiches* ("The Revolution and Its Fetishes"). The prototype of the postwar Communist heretic is not André Marty, the legendary figure of the Black Sea mutiny—he recently died in complete oblivion—or Auguste Lecoeur, who had long been the second most powerful man in the Party (both were expelled in connection with Eastern European trials and denounced as police agents), but Hervé, still under forty, and today, when hundreds of intellectuals and thousands of workers are leaving or drifting away from the Party, his rebellion appears as the first timid sign of a mass defection from the party machine. This same Hervé has recently founded a "Marxist Club" as a preliminary step toward forming a new, "genuinely Marxist" party. He is a true heretic, for he is convinced that he represents the true orthodoxy, and that he understands Lenin better than the men who control the Party machine. What gave him the courage to write his book, he says in *La Révolution et les Fétiches,* was the conviction that he was not alone. "Would I have otherwise dared to formulate my suspicions, to publish them? But there is today in Communism an underground spirit whose influence reaches very far."

Well, this underground spirit has now come to the surface. Old militants and fellow travelers are turning away from the Party with abhorrence. Aimé Césaire, deputy of Martinique and France's most important Negro poet, on the day of the Budapest revolt resigned from the Party and wrote in a letter to Maurice Thorez: "Khrushchev's

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revelations have thrown—at least I hope they have—all those who take part in Communist action into an abyss of confusion and shame. Those corpses, those tortures, those martyrs—neither the posthumous rehabilitations nor the official speeches will make us forget them. . . .' And as Pierre Hervé had done before him, Césaire denounced the French Party for having remained obdurate and incorrigibly Stalinist: "All the other Communist parties are in ferment—in Italy, Poland, Hungary, China. And in the midst of this raging storm, the French Party stands still, contemplates itself and declares that it is satisfied with itself."

Those who have not wavered in their loyalty have only the bitter comfort that they are once again being subjected to a moral blockade, standing alone against a world of enemies. Their ultimate argument—as advanced by Aragon's wife Elsa Triolet, in almost stammering prose—is that it is precisely in such difficult situations that men of courage separate themselves from the cowards, "as was the case under the occupation, when we defied the Nazis."

But the comparison could not have been more unhappily chosen. The Poles, with the entire Communist intelligentsia in accord, in the face of great peril put an end to that subjection to Moscow, which the French Party leadership does not dare question even today. The Hungarians—and among them many Communists, including writers who, like the Polish ones, are well known in French Leftist circles—dare even today, with their country under Russian occupation, to raise their voices in behalf of freedom. If one is really to hark back to the Nazis, the years of occupation, and the struggle for liberation, clearly it is not in the editorials of *Lettres Françaises* today that the tradition of the Resistance is being carried on.

When Pierre Hervé called upon the Party leadership no longer to oppose the trend toward de-Stalinization, and not to doom itself to isolation at the very moment it was striving for a popular front, he was attacked not only by the Party bureaucrats and petty inquisitors, but also by a world-renowned philosopher, who was not even a Party member, but who felt that Hervé's criticisms had gone too far—Jean-Paul Sartre. Although Hervé had written out of a conviction that he was not alone, Sartre met his book with a cry of *"Vae Soli,"* admonishing him in these priestly words: "He who tries to go all alone beyond the dogmas, remains behind them." In other words, to think correctly, one must think with the masses. At the same time, however, Sartre reproached the Party bureaucrats for having created such heretics by their own obduracy, and arrived at a peculiar theory, according to which the Party is always right objectively, while its stupid intellectuals

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are right subjectively. In so far as there is such a thing as a Marxist culture—and according to Sartre this is the only possible one today—it can be fostered, he said, only outside the party, not within its ranks.

Jean-Paul Sartre is mentioned here not because we believe he has made any worthwhile contributions to political thinking, but because he is the most famous and the most prominent of the "Mandarins," who—whether they were existentialists, Christians, or Progressives—approved almost everything the Party did, but justified their approval by arguments different from those supplied by Party intellectuals, couched in a different terminology. The greatest respect for the Party strategists and contempt for the Party thinkers were for Sartre, as for this entire group, compatible. The Party was never fully pleased with Sartre—he was too complex, too unpredictable. But at a time when the intellectuals had begun more or less quietly to move away from Party organizations such as the National Writers' Committee, he was their only important new recruit. When dozens of writers resigned from this committee because it refused to take a stand on the doctors' plot in Moscow and to condemn the anti-Semitic statements made in connection with it, Sartre thought the moment opportune to have himself elected a member of its executive board. Earlier, in his book on Jean Genet, Sartre had given a long-winded existentialist psychoanalysis of the "traitor," in which Trotsky, Bukharin, and Rajk figure, in the most matter-of fact fashion, as historical examples.

In order not to appear to contradict himself in this new role (in this, peculiarly enough, he imitated the behavior of a character in Koestler's novel about the future, published four years earlier), he tried to prevent his play *Les Mains Sales* from being produced at the time he was playing a star role on the Peace Committee in Vienna. Then he went to the Soviet Union, where he discovered that the Soviet citizens were objective in their thinking—not personal, like the decadent Westerners—and for that reason never criticized governments. This was evidence, he reported, that they had their minds on science, not on gossip. This was shortly before the Khrushchev speech. But even after that speech Sartre broke with the well-known Marxist Pierre Naville, whom Hervé defended against him. Such breaks with friends and collaborators have marked the entire history of Sartre's magazine *Les Temps Modernes*—from the dispute with Rousset, who spoke of Russian forced labor "at the wrong time," to the break with the philosopher Merleau-Ponty, who dared to revise the Communist doctrine. After so many breaks, it only remained for Sartre to break with Communism and his own interpretation of it, and this he did when, upset by the Hungarian

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events, he came out against the Soviet leaders, not merely because of their actions in Hungary, but because they represented "thirty years of lies and ossification." All of a sudden he was aware that in Hungary "terror and stultification had prevailed for twelve years"—but his long interview in *L'Express,* in which he formulated his break with the Party, shows no trace of realization of the obvious fact that his own support of the Party during the Stalin-Zhdanov era had made him part of the very "stultification" he was now denouncing. Instead, he declared with professorial assurance that the Marshall Plan was responsible for the Iron Curtain (without regard for chronology, which does not confirm this), and that Raymond Aron, according to an entirely unconfirmed and false word-of-mouth report, had welcomed the Hungarian tragedy as a confirmation of his anti-Communism. It was in those terms, then, without a trace of modesty, that the most prominent of the fellow travelers broke with Communism. It must be said, however, that behind these all-too-fluid, all-too-cheap phrases there pulsated a genuine anger. Sartre sensed that reality had destroyed his theories.

There is also something tortured about the break of the Catholic novelist and most widely read polemicist of France, François Mauriac, who, speaking for the Right in his struggle against a reactionary North African policy, had no enemies among the Left. He had accepted membership in the executive body of the Communist-directed France-Soviet Society, and declared in an interview that even though the Russians could not understand his political essays they had already advanced so far that they could understand his novels. Now he has resigned from that society, and has described his two actions—his joining and his resignation—not as episodes in his personal biography, but as two turning points in the history of the entire postwar period.

There is a world of difference between the evolutions of the heads and pens of the "great writers," and the less publicized genuine inner transformations being effected among many young intellectuals, whose spiritual home was not fame, but the party as an actually experienced community. Many have undergone a change of heart these days whose names do not appear in print; in those who write, the style enables us at once to distinguish a genuine and deep experience from a mere pirouette, a polemical shift. And it is professed Communists rather than fellow travelers in whom the transformation is at once a real change of heart and an enrichment. Here we could mention many names, which would, however, mean little to the non-French reader. Instead, let us concentrate on a document that deserves to be included as a new and significant chapter in the book *The God that Failed.* It comes

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from a French Communist of the younger generation, and gives us an idea of how in a country of tolerance, free speech, and anticlericalism this curiously misjudged, over-fanatic party could have become the strongest political force, exerting an enormous attraction on all intellectuals—scientists, writers, artists—a phenomenon that is much discussed, but still remains essentially unexplained and mysterious. The document in question is the profession of faith of Edgar Morin, a thirty-five-year-old sociologist, author of three books (one on postwar Germany, one on the attitude of various civilizations toward death, and one an extensive sociological analysis of the motion picture). Answering an *enquête* of the Paris magazine *Les Lettres Nouvelles* (September 1956), Morin, who was a Party member from 1942 to 1951, wrote:

I have never publicly denounced the aberrations, lies, and crimes of the Stalinist policy although I was clearly aware of them. . . . In 1941 the pacifist and socialist ideas that had determined my life lost all meaning or were perverted into collaborationism with the invader. The war in the east confronted me with an almost biological decision between the Soviet Union, bastion of the revolution, and Nazi Germany. The defense of Moscow, and later the victory of Stalingrad, exonerated Stalin, after the fact, of his crimes, which were lost in the shadows of the past. Was not Stalin the man of steel, that our age of steel needed?

The destructive rage of Zhdanov, the campaign against Tito, the public trials, Morin had swallowed all these in silence, as had so many intellectuals, who were otherwise professional humanists and signers of manifestoes of protest. Why?

Five years of militant party activity had taught me to accept certain stupid actions, lies, and taboos as decreed fate. . . . Soviet reality filled me with both the greatest enthusiasm and the greatest horror. I feared that by attacking the cancerous cell I would damage the living cell. . . . At that time I thought that only the victory of the revolution the world over could bring about a 'thaw.' The victory of Stalinism would kill Stalinism. . . . I was unable to speak out publicly, because I could not leave the Party. My membership had assumed a mystical character. I belonged to the proletarian community. Outside the Party there were only petty-bourgeois swamps. I was a political corpse waiting for the Resurrection.

And Morin, like others, speaks of the "fear of being alone." He was finally able to overcome that fear when, like other *raisonneurs,* he was expelled by the intellectual obscurantists and Zhdanovists.

Between the changeable Sartre and the changed Morin hundreds of shadings of doubt and defection are to be found. France—and Italy, where the crisis of Communism is even deeper—will soon number, at

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least among its intellectuals, more ex-Communists than Communists, exactly as in the U.S.!

One often hears the question: What can one do with people who came to Communism not in the period of revolutionary struggles and intoxicating illusions, but in the period of cold terror and the most abject abasement? It is too easily forgotten that these people have experienced Communism and the revolution only in the form of Stalinism; and in their search for the hardest core of unflinching opposition to the all-corrupting bourgeoisie they found only the Soviet Union and the Party, i.e., Stalin and his henchmen. Hatred of the bourgeoisie and of bourgeois democracy is more deep-seated in many French intellectuals than love of the proletariat. The intellectuals, whether scientists in poorly equipped laboratories or underpaid teachers, have the feeling that they are on the bottom rung of France's social ladder, whereas justice and reason would seem to require that they play a more important part in social life than, say, the subsidized beet sugar producers. This makes them susceptible to the radical rejection of an order in which everything can be criticized in words, but which in fact remains that mixture of disintegration and stagnation which democracy, as it functions in France, appears to them to be. Why in such a "cold" society even the Communist Party, in the low state to which it has sunk, could seem to them a warming, sheltering "community," and this not merely a "militant community," but a truly mystical "life community," the object of envy of many socially-minded Christians—this question why is not one that can be answered in a short article; but it is a fact that the Party has been just such a community to them. It is precisely because the Party was so ruthless, so uncompromisingly opposed to the bourgeois society, precisely because it caused the bourgeoisie to tremble and because it defended deeds of horror and identified itself with terrorism, that it became a power in which one could seek refuge even if one secretly feared it. Finally many intellectuals were driven to the Party for reasons that are quite unromantic and unmystical—not only because it spoke in the name of a better future, but because it is a power in the present world. Until Budapest no actor, no movie director, indeed no wardrobe attendant in the Comédie Française dared to take a position openly against Communism. In addition to its attraction, there was also the factor that it was an institution which, within the framework of the existing order, was itself a power to be reckoned with.

Budapest has mobilized against this power—in France as elsewhere —the far greater power of the unorganized, diffuse detestation of Com-

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munism. This movement, like all mass movements, includes the best elements side by side with less good ones, but the crucial factor in it is the genuine feeling of indignation that has spread very widely inside the ranks of the Communists themselves. The Communists who had preserved a good conscience in the face of all criticisms have lost this good conscience with Hungary. A foreign army that suppresses a whole nation awakens in France memories of the Nazi occupation, and the general amazement at a struggle whose continuation seems unbelievable, arouses the need to do something courageous on one's own part. France today is full of people who were never Communists, who are ashamed of their inability to do something for Hungary. The Communists have at least this much of an advantage over them, that they can do something—namely, weaken Communism by breaking with it. The feeling of thus contributing something to a struggle which has suddenly altered all perspectives helps them, today, to get over the great "fear of being alone." But what will they do tomorrow?

A talented novelist of Albert Camus' circle, Jean Bloch Michel, asks this question, above all in relation to workers who leave the Party, because, perhaps erroneously, he thinks that the intellectuals will somehow find their way. He writes:

We know what it means to break with the Party, to many workers for whom it was the entire content of their lives. To break with the Party means the worker has not only to renounce that which up until then he has regarded as the truth, but also, in most cases, to lose his friends, to find himself alone. Much more alone than the intellectual—just look at Sartre—who slips from one camp to the other without losing anything, except, one should like to hope, some illusions about himself.

But what Bloch Michel says about the militant workers, is also true of many intellectuals who are not "prominent," and we have seen that even a professor at the Collège de France trembles with fear lest the Party even censure him, let alone expel him. The fear may in many cases be despicable, and when a Paris physician who demanded the execution of his Moscow colleagues and prepared to rejoice over it, today gradually begins to doubt whether everything *L'Humanité* tells him is really true, it is difficult to have much sympathy with his worries. But whereas the Party is an enormous collective body, the hundreds, the thousands who separate themselves from it partly or completely, are all individual cases; each of them is "a spiritual refugee" who needs protection, understanding, a new home. True enough, the French Communist Party, as it manifests itself in its official organs, is conducted on a repulsively low level, and is in a state of stagnation from which it

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could possibly emerge only after several years of Russian occupation, as was the case with the Hungarian Party. But it is not the only instance of stagnation in French political life. Morin wrote in another essay that in France, Socialists and Communists live by mutual coprophagia—each thrives on the excrements of the other: "the murderers of Budapest," and "the oppressors of Algeria and the aggressors against Egypt."

It would be most unfair to equate the sins of the Socialist government and those of the Communists, to see the attack on Suez or even the Algerian policy as on a par with the Russia action in Hungary. But this much may be said: the Socialist party as it is today, after governing France for eleven months, does not particularly attract those who leave the Communist party for serious reasons, and who seek another political and spiritual community. These defections will lead only to an increase in the number—we cannot say in the weight—of the "homeless men of the Left" in whom so much good will and so many political and moral energies and hopes go to waste, and who end up merely marking time.

That France itself, without the help of the Magyars, had not long ago done away with or seriously damaged this obsolete, stagnant, and completely puppet-like Party, which had not brought about a political strike for years, is not reassuring. It would be absurd to expect that now, after Budapest, everything will happen by itself. It is true that French democracy today is not faced, as it was during previous crises, by individual Communists who have undergone a change of heart, but by a mass phenomenon or at any rate by innumerable individual cases, which might easily develop into a mass phenomenon. But to take advantage of this change, French society would have to change itself. In Hungary, the explosive self-dissolution of the Communist Party, the majority of whose members have become fighters for freedom, has revolutionized society. Today, when Communism as a militant faith and a militant community is entering a major crisis, only two camps emerge in France—the nationalists and those for a European Union.

French Communism, which described itself both as an ultra-nationalism and as the only concrete form of internationalism, is dying. Its dead weight will continue to paralyze France for a long time to come. But when the energies that have until now been bound up with Communism and wasted, are turned toward other goals, many stagnations may come to an end, not just the Communist one. In Western as in Eastern Europe, the end of Communism is the beginning of a revolution.

Francois Bondy

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ART CHRONICLE

BRITISH PAINTING vs. PARIS

Although the Museum of Modern Art's recent survey of the last 150 years of British painting was presumably concerned with "painting *per se*" rather than with "taste," the astonishing thing was that some of the paintings chosen were actually hanging on the Museum's walls. The Museum, to be sure, has occasionally ventured into pre-Cézannesque territory in order to make a point about the ancestry of a contemporary attitude, but here were pictures which controverted, in part or in full, the very premises of the twentieth-century galleries below. Indeed, the jarring discord between the elaborate gilt frames of the earlier nineteenth-century British paintings and the blank, monochrome Museum walls might have symbolized this collision of values. To a spectator whose eyes had been trained on Matisse and Mondrian, the second half of the show might have been compatible and familiar, but the first and better half must have looked like a new world.

The first new world belonged to Turner and Constable. Their twenty-odd paintings and watercolors were carefully selected to appeal to modern sensibilities. Hence, Turner was shown largely in his late, ostensibly more abstract phase; and Constable was also seen at his latest and sketchiest. This, of course, falsified their art to a degree, but at least it in no way offended the contemporary predilection for a flat, continuous picture surface undefiled by detailed modeling or sudden plunges into space. It became possible, then, to comment on how very much Turner's "Norham Castle" resembled a Rothko in its luminous, thinly stained veils of yellow and blue; or to remark that Constable's vibrant, palpable meshes of paint made him look like an abstract impressionist *manqué*. Such analogies were natural enough. As the current late-Monet revival has more than demonstrated, the newly chartered realms of the avant-garde have necessarily altered our experience of the past. Yet if the old-fashioned frames failed to indicate that these were pictures involving other, different values from ours, the pictures themselves should have told us that they left a large and essential residue after being filtered through a fine, contemporary sieve.

Turner's "Evening Star" was a case in point. The star was so small

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that its presence was completely irrelevant to the painting considered as a certain arrangement of horizontal tonal areas; and, indeed, had the painting been a Rothko, it would have been irrelevant. But the star, though minuscule and therefore ignored by eyes nurtured on the School of Paris, was the crucial issue of the painting, the integral protagonist in Turner's hushed commentary on the cyclic passage of day to night. Like the vast expanses of sea and sky, it added still another dimension to nature's infinity, and to miss this was virtually to miss the painting. The "Interior at Petworth" could likewise have been mistaken for an abstract triumph of glittering, burnished hues, set into motion by a bilious green. This it was, but it was also, and quite as fundamentally, a spectacle of nature's and time's omnipotence, a scene of ruin and decay in which crumbling furniture, rummaging dogs, sunlit mirrors coalesced into a smoldering drama of light, heat, dust, and moisture. And the even later "Snowstorm" was not just a stunning whirlpool of whites and grays; it was a romantic artist's staggering translation into paint of the fusion of nature's most intangible and elemental forces. If this was an abstract painting, it was abstract only insofar as wind, sea, snow, and smoke are abstract.

While Constable is generally considered literal-minded by comparison with Turner, he is in many ways no more or no less factual than his contemporary; it may simply be that a country storm is more familiar to us than an ocean blizzard. Indeed, the Suffolk master would have claimed, with Turner, that he painted what he saw; and if he did so very much more than that, it was because he experienced the same pantheistic impulses which motivated Turner's more extravagant performances. It was well and good to admire the liberated, proto-impressionist palette and brushstroke which resulted from Constable's search for fidelity to visual facts; but to understand his greatness was to realize, too, that the shimmering fabric of his paint surfaces was also a projection of a romantic striving to embrace the totality of nature's power. In the breathtaking "Stoke-by-Nayland," all of God's world—church, leaf, cloud, earth, man, and beast—is transformed into a soggy, glistening whole which quivers with anticipation of an approaching storm; and we, like Constable, should have stood in awe before this cosmic drama, as well as before the speckled animacy of pigment. Indeed, the empathic intensity of such a canvas, as of "Fording the River," belonged as fully to the realm of emotion as to the realm of vision and recalled Constable's avowal (one which again could have been voiced by Turner): "Painting for me is but another word for feeling." Even such a modest, diminutive work as the cloud study involved this merger of fact and feeling, presenting not only a precise observation of mete-

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orological phenomena but also a romantic wonder before the infinite, formless expanses of the sky.

If the sheer painterly sensuousness of these Constables and Turners had sufficient impact to make many spectators forget that their creators were basically concerned with values foreign to the School of Paris, the Pre-Raphaelites could offer no such deception. With only seven canvases, they assaulted contemporary attitudes and visual sensibilities with unparalleled violence and, as such, comprised the major revelation of the show. It was no accident that their gallery was invariably more crowded than the others. This was not only a question of the close scrutiny their work demanded, for the Blakes and the watercolor landscapes of the preceding gallery required this, too, and were passed over with little attention. It was rather that by flagrantly and passionately denying every premise of the twentieth-century aesthetic, the Pre-Raphaelites provoked spectators into looking and thinking.

Moral purpose, scrupulous realism, bourgeois pathos, intricate narrative, shrill color and space relations—these were the heresies which outraged modern eyes. But these outrages were so forceful and so genuinely felt that once one was willing to accept their alien language, they could easily become a positive vocabulary in the same way that Kline's or Still's recent pictorial iconoclasms suddenly looked familiar and became art. Like the living avant-garde, the Pre-Raphaelite experience, largely unknown to American eyes, incited spectators to either extreme antipathy or adulation, but never indifference. Holman Hunt's "Awakening Conscience" was a prime offender, for it was easy enough to scoff at the jungly, Victorian density of this St. John's Wood interior, at the explicit drama of spiritual redemption, at the meticulously painted strands of unraveled wool, at the acidulous cerises and greens. But with a rearrangement of prejudices, one could just as easily have been rewarded with a work of gripping visual and literary intensity, a work which far transcended its incontestable value as an historical document. The searing, febrile anguish of this drama of sin could convince; the disguised secular symbolism could take on the intellectual fascination of a Renaissance iconographic puzzle; the pious insistence on literal fact could acquire the magical flavor we admire in the early Flemings; and, most paradoxically, the incredibly crowded two-dimensional pattern, which offered a multiplicity of pictorial incident rarely equaled in the history of art, could even begin to provide those values of a labyrinthine, over-all surface activity which the investigations of a Tobey or a Pollock have taught us to enjoy.

These qualities—and positive qualities they are—were consistently evident in the works of Dyce, Millais, Hunt, and Brown, if not of

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Rossetti, and their power was not easily exhausted. One discovered more and more—the abruptly fragmented heads, the red and green cabbages, the infant's hand and stockinged foot in Brown's "Last of England"; the symbolic cat and bird or the approaching hour—high noon—in the "Awakening Conscience"; the poignant expression of tenderness and prophecy on Mary's face or the uncannily precise wood-shavings in Millais' "Christ in the House of His Parents"; the searching geological exactitude of the rocks in Dyce's "Pegwell Bay," a work whose intense seeing and feeling should have given contemporary sharp-focus painters much pause. In short, these paintings demonstrated that in the 1850s, in the white heat of their fervor, the Pre-Raphaelites were able to persuade us that their alien values were genuine.

Unhappily, the second half of the survey demonstrated that without fervor, even familiar values looked neither genuine nor persuasive, for the course of British painting between Whistler and the emergence of Bacon and Sutherland produced a tepid, innocuous succession of painters who paid so much homage to French values that they lost sight of British ones. Had masters like Burne-Jones or Watts been included—presumably they did not conform to the criterion of "painting *per se*"—we should have had a more stimulating and indigenous picture of the later nineteenth century, just as the inclusion of some earlier nineteenth-century subject painters might have served to put the Blakes in a more explicable historical framework. But as it was, there remained little more than a series of anemic Gallicisms, unless one excepted the primitive, Stanley Spencer, whose chalky, detailed canvases, while appealing in their naive solemnity, looked pallid when compared to their Pre-Raphaelite ancestors. In this selective context, Whistler, asserting his qualitative and historical importance with only three works, appeared responsible for this about-face in British taste by insisting, in theory and in practice, upon those progressive French attitudes which held that painting was first of all painting and not nature, morality, emotion, or narrative. If one strained very hard, one could detect British qualities in Sickert or in Matthew Smith, but by and large their works could be slurred over without loss as that of all too admiring students of Degas, Vuillard, or the Fauve Matisse. Why, one rightly asked, should one look at Smith's "Fitzroy St. Nude" of 1916 when Matisse had painted the same picture so very much better ten years earlier? Could one really hold that the inflection Wyndham Lewis gave to cubism was more than that of a gifted amateur? There were, of course, occasional glimmers of life (Sickert's vertiginous "Raising of Lazarus" and Steer's haunting "Walberswick Pier" were among them), but in general, these

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paintings only proved that Whistler's refinement, pressed one step further, could become well-mannered vapidity and that the structural lucidity and hedonism of the School of Paris looked hopelessly flabby and uncomfortable when transplanted onto British soil.

The saddest case was that of Paul Nash, whose subject matter suggested the revival of an authentic, native nature mysticism, but whose borrowed Continental vocabulary proved inadequate to express this British vision. In the same way, Pasmore's "Evening Star," instead of recreating the ecstatic evening stars of Turner or the all too thinly represented Palmer, fell victim to a limp, wispy fusion of Whistler and cubism; and his art only took on an alert complexion in "The Wave," where knotty, spiraling whorls rejected such formulae and recalled the irrational, organic rhythms of Palmer's landscape. And even Ben Nicholson, the one British artist who was able to make a positive statement by blending the attenuated discretions of Whistler with the intellectual scaffolding of cubism, has lately turned to what may be an even more original direction by introducing into partially cubist canvases landscape fragments whose topographical precision evoked the Girtins, Cotmans, and Boningtons displayed in the second gallery.

It was hardly a surprise, then, that the most pungent and distinctive contemporary British painters on view—Bacon and Sutherland—were the ones who owed the least to School of Paris values and the ones whose eccentric, individual art was the very opposite of that compromise with traditional, impersonal attitudes which produced the sequential achievements of modern French painting. In Sutherland's case, the very sources of his art—Blake, Palmer, Gruenewald, the *un*-French side of Picasso—not only speak for his fundamental antipathy to the School of Paris, but provide him as well with an appropriate language in which to realize his acutely romantic identification with the pulsating, anguished life of growing thorns and gorses. And if Sutherland's probing into such organic mysteries is compelling enough to prevent us rightly from placing him on scales designed for Braque and finding him underweight, Bacon's unique vision can also convince us in its own, British terms. For in his peculiar way, Bacon revives that British marriage of precise fact and intense feeling, only his facts are not the natural facts of Constable, Turner, and Millais, or the crystal-clear visionary facts of Blake, but rather the horrific facts of twentieth-century urban experience. News photos, television screens, traffic collisions are the images which reverberate through his hallucinatory canvases, and their reality is seized in emotional, as well as optical, terms. Before these works, one not only sees spectral portraits, screaming jowls, violent physical assaults, one feels horror, pain, threat. In other words, Sutherland and

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Bacon would seem to achieve their power by rejecting that hegemony of French values which had temporarily vitiated British art and by restating, in contemporary terms, those attitudes which nourished the triumphs of the earlier nineteenth century. But as anyone familiar with the work of such younger British painters as Scott or Davie can recognize, this dialectic between London and Paris—and now, New York—has today become an animated and productive one, and the virtues of British insularity may soon be a matter of history.

Robert Rosenblum

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THEATER CHRONICLE

A PLAUSIBLE IRISHMAN

Shaw's case as a writer seemed to be so definitely closed, and the critics to have nailed him down so tightly and rightly to his proper place (whatever it may be), that people of my generation never thought the matter would have to be re-opened. Yet we are just now in the midst of a Shaw boom—four of his plays are currently being presented, either on or off Broadway, and the musical *My Fair Lady,* the most sensational smash of recent years, draws its book from a fifth play, *Pygmalion*—so we have to recognize that the old man has some kind of vitality that outlives all those other qualities of his plays which are so definitely dated. Of course, the mere fact of revival is no incontrovertible proof of value, since the entertainment industry seems to be flourishing just now: there are a great many actors around, most of them quite competent, small theaters are able to find space and backers (in the theater, at least, there seems to be considerable money available for non-commercial enterprises), and audiences for live theater are more numerous than at any time in recent years; the problem for producers is only how to lay hands on some decent material. So far Shaw seems to be the best that they have been able to come up with, and this fact is a considerable revelation of the present state of our theater and the level of its audiences.

Early in the fall it was rumored that this was to be a good—perhaps even "great"—season for New York theater: the off-Broadway movement of recent years has consolidated itself and virtually created a new theater-going public, and this influence has in turn flowed back upon the Broadway stage. The season has, in one sense, lived up to these rumors: at the present time one can see in New York productions of Shakespeare (the Old Vic imported from England), Shaw, O'Neill (who is also having something of a revival), Moliére (in a new translation by Richard Wilbur), and a good many other things of purely diverting or spectacular nature. The only trouble is that this "vitality" of the theater rather resembles that of a dank tropical undergrowth—a chaos without the glimmer of anything resembling a leading idea or a direction. There are no new playwrights; the experimental plays put on in some of the little

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theaters are the least reassuring things in the whole season, for they are the expressions of a younger generation that has absolutely nothing to say; there is no sign of a new and creative sense of the theater, of what the stage might do or be at the present time, of the kind of statement it might make for this generation—a sense of the kind Shaw had and made use of for the late Victorian and Edwardian generations. This kind of vacuum the Shaw revival fits perfectly. For a retrograde audience he is still daring, full of profound ideas, and very amusing even in the places where he is most kittenish. The audience comes away with a sense, however vague, that the theater has been used for some purpose, that it has challenged them in some way—which can hardly be said of most of the dramatic productions that live and die over a single Broadway season.

Shaw, however, is not to be finally measured by this audience. He is one of those writers who can be appreciated only after we have assimilated all the worst things that can be said against him, even though the worst will always be the things that make him popular with a large section of the audience and so make possible the pleasure of seeing him produced. Among artists Shaw is the Perfect Middlebrow, and so the King of the Middlebrows, for whom he has even that *cachet* indispensable for all middlebrow admiration, namely that at bottom he may be secretly and profoundly highbrow. Shaw was no thinker but an intelligent and tireless journalist of ideas, and of course the middlebrow appropriation of all experience is journalistic to the core. This is the aspect of Shaw that Yeats said was revealed to him once in a dream in which Shaw appeared as a sewing machine clicking away and grinning grinning. Certainly Ould Barney was a tiresome noodle, spinning out ideas with a brisk and extrovert cheerfulness never daunted by a poet's sense of the obscure and dense substance of life that all very clear ideas must violate. But even as a journalist of ideas Shaw performed a unique and valuable service for his period, and one which British insularity would have permitted only to a maverick and extraordinary Irishman.

The Irishman who escapes Ireland usually turns, in his culture, to the Continent, whether or not he stays on bodily in London; and since the English have a profound indifference to all ideas spawned across the Channel, Shaw was lucky enough to have a role perfectly cut out for him as the journalistic spokesman for the very radical ideas of the Continent—Ibsen, Wagner, Nietszche, Tolstoy, and Marx. Since he was no thinker, it did not matter at all to him that these ideas might be inconsistent among themselves, and he was perfectly able to reconcile Tolstoy's pacifism and vegetarianism with Nietzsche's Will to

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Power, or the latter's aristocratic politics with Marxian socialism. His eclecticism served him as a dramatist, since by letting different ideas run away with him at different times he was able to secure something like the dramatist's necessary balance and attitude of detachment toward any one set of dogmas. He was not a great creator of character, but because he could be sympathetic with so many different kinds of ideas he was able to have some understanding of the different human beings who might hold them. In *Saint Joan* he sympathizes as much with the Catholic theology of the Inquisitor as with Joan's Protestantism; in *Major Barbara* he cannot choose between the aestheticism of the professor of Greek and the power philosophy of the munitions maker; for that matter, the Salvation Army gospel of the heroine has the last word and might even be the true one. Shaw cannot be accused of insincerity for the simple reason that he did not know what it means to believe in an idea; he was a dramatist, first and last, the role of preacher and pedagogue were part of his comic mask, and in the end all ideas are equally grist for his dramatic mill.

This, it seems to me, is one of the first things about the current revival that has to be recognized. Because the middlebrows have appropriated Shaw, it has been fashionable among highbrows to snoot him as a playwright. We have been told that he is a magnificent pamphleteer, that the prefaces are greater than the plays, and, most recently, that the best Shaw really resides in his musical criticism; anything but that he is a great playwright. The music criticism is indeed exuberant and wonderful, but it is nowadays out of date and rather unnecessary—a fact which Shaw himself acknowledged; the prefaces bore us to death even when we admire the extraordinary virtues of the Shavian prose, for they reveal Shaw at his most pedagogic and long-winded. None of these would now be read were it not for Shaw the playwright; and even the plays themselves make pretty dull reading unless one comes to them after having seen a performance. Shaw loved and understood the stage, and he did not write closet dramas; even the success of his journalism is due in great part to the fact that he carries it off with an actor's swagger.

One can lament the state of the contemporary theater which has to revive such a piece of fluff as *The Apple Cart,* but in Shaw's behalf one has to marvel that here at his weakest and most senile he is still able, with a good cast, to carry the audience along with him. An audience (as was the case on the evening I saw this play) is willing to laugh at almost anything if they are given half a chance, and Shaw gives that chance even though his wit is often creaking and altogether too calculable on the printed page. Perhaps he learned most about the stage from

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his youthful experience of haranguing crowds in Hyde Park; what the orator requires is simply to maintain an equable and fluent tone so that any remark which is a slight variation from the expected cliché falls upon the ears as the most extravagant witticism. This Shaw does, and the result is that all of his plays are vehicle-plays, depending on the presence, timing, and general fluency of the acting. The greatest plays, of course, do not live merely as vehicles of acting; but knowing what a good actor may do with a very banal statement is a good part of the dramatist's craft. Thus Shaw is never funny out of context. He gets his humor only on stage through the voice and presence of the actor, and then usually through the most platitudinous of material—a completely typed cockney, a stuffy dowager, or a milksop gentleman.

As Shaw is able to circumvent his lack of a great comic imagination, he is almost able in one play, *Saint Joan,* to get around his most serious limitation, an almost total lack of poetry. This is the reason Yeats found his glibness so appalling, and the Irish can perhaps best spot him as the type of "the plausible Irishman," a character who often ends up in politics though not usually at Shaw's intellectual level. In *Saint Joan* Shaw was tempted into material to which only a great poet could do justice—the ordeal and tragedy of a saint—and it is something of a triumph that he does not fall flat on his face, and with acting like that of Siobhan McKenna can even manage to put the whole thing across. Miss McKenna's performance is by far the most memorable in the current revival; she manages to get poetry into Shaw almost at the expense of wrenching her own larynx. Only after coming from her performance to the text do we realize how much of this poetry is Miss McKenna's own. What can be said for Shaw is that he did not write a play that would have made impossible a performance like Miss McKenna's—and this is more positive praise than it might at first seem, for the achievement is one that could be managed only by a few dramatists. Shakespeare takes up an actor by the scruff of the neck and hurls him bodily into poetry, and whatever comes out of the actor's mouth, botched or wrenched or awkward as it may be, is still poetry; Shaw writes a play which can be a "vehicle" for a great poetic performance. That is the measure of the difference between the two.

Even to produce such a vehicle the old fox has to draw on all his dramatist's bag of tricks; if he cannot take the theme of the saint by direct frontal assault, at least he knows how to proceed by flanking maneuvers: the introduction of Joan, for example, in the first scene, with the business of the hens' miraculously laying again, is perfectly right for setting the frame for a saint's legend; he surrounds the action with

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historical material, but not too obtrusively; just enough to give the drama of its time; and the final scene, probably as economical and imaginative a one as Shaw ever wrote, is the best and only way he could suggest the essential paradox of the saint for mankind. Only at the climax, where Joan recants her confession, is the old *prosateur* really out of his depth, though he gives it his very best try:

> I could do without my warhorse; I could drag about in a skirt; I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and soldiers pass me and leave me behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind. But without these things I cannot live; and by your wanting to take them away from me, or from any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and that mine is of God.

Even in Miss McKenna's inspired delivery the lines did not quite come off: the phrases fall into place too smoothly, the epithets are too pat, the language too pointed and rhetorical—the tidy hand of the Shavian prose has arranged neatly a few poetical emblems. But Shaw does know his own limitations very well and he promptly cuts the blather short, and the play moves on to be redeemed by its final scene.

What is remarkable about the scene—and this usually goes unnoticed in Shaw—is that underneath all his intellectual antics he was really a genial and kindly man who had much fondness for his fellow human beings, and of all kinds and classes too. Perhaps no other writer ever wrote less out of violent inner conflict and tension than did Shaw, and the experience of the saint would therefore seem to have been the most remote from the old Blarneyer; but *Saint Joan* succeeds, not merely by the dramatist's craft, but because Shaw's human sympathies could embrace his own temperamental opposite. He may not be a poet; but he did have a real feeling for people; and this is no small recommendation for a dramatist. It is also particularly worth saying at a time when O'Neill, also undergoing something of a revival, is on the boards with two plays where every muscle is taut and strained to produce profound, throbbing, passionate, stark human drama but with a feeling for people that is ultimately cerebral and remote.

The revival of Shaw is certainly not the one thing now needful for the American theater; our problems, in and out of the theater, are different from his, and much of Shaw is as outdated as the ormolu clocks and velvet waistcoats of late Victorianism and Edwardianism; but the revival will do no harm, no harm at all.

William Barrett

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Robert Plank

LIGHTER THAN AIR, BUT HEAVY AS HATE

An Essay on Space Travel

In the brief span of time since the end of World War II, science fiction has carved out a place for itself as a category of literature in its own right. Not a respectable place perhaps: This literary fad, if such it may be called, is usually disregarded, often ridiculed, rarely analyzed. Yet it now enjoys a great and increasing vogue.

It is still a long way from the popularity of the "Western" and the crime story, of course. The appeal of fiction which presents itself as scientific cannot be that universal. It is more or less limited to one segment of the population; but a fairly broad and quite important segment: men, from their teens to their thirties and forties, of urban background and average or higher educational level; students, technicians, the ambitious fellows who feel that they are the new middle class—these seem to be the bulk of the readers. In a large group of that description, science fiction has supplemented, and to an extent even replaced, its older competitors as the type of literature which obviously provides a recreational outlet and less obviously satisfies an emotional need.

The reader who wants to understand and enjoy the leading science fiction magazines needs a nodding acquaintance with such words as extrapolation, mutant, entropy, astrogation, extra-sensory perception, escape velocity, hydroponics, interstellar, hypnotherapy. It is not necessary for those who read or even those who write those stories to know the precise meaning of these or similar terms or to be able to use them operationally. Since technology has so widely replaced the classics in their function of providing the veneer which makes it possible to mistake the schooled for the educated, many people nowadays possess the educational requirement.

It is under the aspect of space travel that science fiction has come to be accepted by nearly everyone as something that, like death and taxes, will be with us. The assumption has been made that the space travel motif springs from two roots: It is thought to foreshadow the actual "conquest of space" by man; and to reflect the shrinking of our world which has left us with no other "frontier."

History does not show much connection between the appearance of

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the motif and the fact that real space travel is now presumably around the corner. Even if we disregard a Greek forerunner as well as those religious works in which space travel was imagined to operate by supernatural rather than by presumably scientific means, the idea is not as new as it is often believed to be. Cyrano de Bergerac used it three hundred years ago. Bishop Francis Goodwin did so even a little earlier (*The Man in the Moone,* 1638).

Furthermore, it is hard to see why science fiction any more than other fiction should be looked at as a forecast. There are indeed some science fiction stories to which this criterion cannot possibly be applied—e.g., stories of trees that walk, talk, or attack people. The chance that we shall find or develop such trees is, to say the least, remote. The case for the hypothesis that science fiction zooms through space because we all will soon do so in fact, is singularly weak.

The shrinking of the Earth is not a very compelling reason either. Writers who want to do so are still able to find recondite spots on the surface of this globe where odd happenings can be presented as going on (think of Shangri-La); to say nothing of the chance of escape into a subterranean location and the truly limitless possibilities of projecting a plot into the future, if all that is wanted is an abstruse time or place in which fantasy can have its play, in which an unrealistic plot can unfold.

But *is* that all that is wanted? Here the "closing of the frontier" comes in. This is indeed a new situation. Civilized countries throughout history have been surrounded by areas of different or lesser civilization with which they have been in a relationship of war or of slightly more peaceful penetration. As late as in the Victorian Era, a young European who drank too much, fought too much, got a "nice" girl pregnant, or had taken too much out of the safe, could be sent to somewhere east of Suez. Adventurous spirits from countries that did not own colonies could be packed off to America. In America, it was, Go West, young man. The only West we have left is Hollywood where science fiction thrives. A recent book (R. B. Robertson, *Of Whales and Men*) has pointed up how "psychopaths" (as the author calls them—i.e., men suffering in their souls) may go whaling to the Antarctic. These things are drops in the bucket. No frontier on a large scale has existed since 1914.

Our generation, with heads swimming from so many "firsts," is also the first that has to face the Herculean task of keeping civilization in balance without the safety valve of a frontier through which human steam can escape. It can hardly be said that we have made a good job

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of it. Science fiction jumps bravely into the breech, offering at least a new frontier in fantasy.

The proponents of space travel seem to hold this truth self-evident, that it is somehow desirable for man to get away from the Earth. Those holding the contrary view formulate theories.

He was a man obsessed with the idea which is at this moment circulating all over our planet in obscure works of "scientifiction," in little Interplanetary Societies and Rocketry Clubs, and between the covers of monstrous magazines, ignored or mocked by the intellectuals, but ready, if ever the power is put into its hands, to open a new chapter of misery for the universe. It is the idea that humanity, having now sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area: that the vast astronomical distances which are God's quarantine regulations, must somehow be overcome. This for a start. But beyond this lies the sweet poison of the false infinite—the wild dream that planet after planet, system after system, in the end galaxy after galaxy, can be forced to sustain, everywhere and for ever, the sort of life which is contained in the loins of our own species—a dream begotten by the hatred of death upon the fear of true immortality, fondled in secret by thousands of ignorant men and hundreds who are not ignorant. The destruction or enslavement of other species in the universe, if such there are, is to these minds a welcome corollary. In Professor Weston the power had at last met the dream. The great physicist had discovered a motive power for his space-ship. (C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*)

This is from the work of a man who by application of formal criteria can be described as one of the great science fiction writers, though of course underneath the surface he is quite different from most of them. Where the "monstrous magazines" are shrill, he is urbane. Where their galactic empires are smashed by blind law, accident, or equally blind superlative crime, so that in all their universe there is no room for Providence, he is religious. Where they are saturnine onlookers, his hero walks to his rendezvous with destiny through the blackout—to fight the Battle of Britain between the stars. He is, if this word be permitted in this Review, partisan.

This makes him, perhaps, a suspect witness; it scarcely exonerates us from examining his point. What his critique implies is the fundamental statement that in talking about space travel, science fiction does *not* talk about space travel, but about something quite different, something beyond space travel—the new start after the traveling is done, and life and death (more the latter) on distant stars.

Their distance actually matters least. Those large figures and arcane measurements seem to have a strangely intoxicant effect on the "fans." Yet, with the greatest of ease, science fiction serves as a deintoxicant also: distances are annulled by superspeedy transportation. Displaying a cava-

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lier attitude toward the laws of physics, spaceships cover lightyears and parsecs in practically no time, so that after all the sound and fury the traveler has not perceived more of the thrill of traveling than if he had gone to New Jersey (furthermore, the places to which he gets are for the most part less attractive than the Pulaski Skyway).

It is remarkable how consistent all this is. Just check the by now fairly common cartoons featuring space travel: rarely do they show spacemen en route. They are practically always shown in the act of arriving. Nor is the genuine article much different from its caricature; with all the lip service to the idea of anticipating the scientific problems of extraterrestrial aviation in fiction, there is hardly a story that pays even a minimum of attention to the trip itself or to any of the immensely complex and fascinating problems of techniques and equipment to be used. The hero embarks, perhaps presses a button, arrives. That is all there is to it.

When Jules Verne, the uncontested master of scientific novels of the late nineteenth century, prepared his Baltimore Gun Club for their trip to the Moon, he planned and designed and computed his projectile down to the finest detail. Things are so much simpler today:

> The ship of the Overlords came sliding in along its glowing meteor-trail through the heart of Carina. It had begun its mad deceleration among the outer planets. . . . Slowly the immense fields surrounding the sun were absorbing its momentum, while for a million kilometers behind, the stray energies of the stardrive were painting the heavens with fire.
>
> Jan Rodricks was coming home. . . . (Arthur C. Clarke, *Childhood's End*)

Or take Lieutenant-Colonel Robert B. Corcoran in "Mirror, Mirror" (in a recent *Future Science Fiction*): "He touched his tie, straightened the collar insignia which told that he was attached to the Terran Occupational Forces on the planet Nurra of the double-sun Mira. Lastly he straightened his shoulders and raised his eyes." So he can see the interesting shadow effects caused by the "double-sun," but that is all. Nobody in the story travels anywhere.

Imagine, if you can, Odysseus without the eternally foaming waves; Joseph Conrad's captains and mates without ever feeling a storm against their bodies; Hemingway's Old Man never going out to fish; imagine the whole world's lore and literature of the sea reduced to a description of ships at anchor and sailors in port—and you have a picture of the literature of space travel to the extent to which current science fiction represents it.

The contemptuous answer that C. S. Lewis has given to "scientifiction" is calculated to surprise, even to shock, the "fans." Yet, if it

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were translated from hostile into friendly language, it might be found not to differ so very much from the answers given by some authors who are on the other side of the fence.

Kenneth Heuer is sure that there is life on heavenly bodies. In *Men of Other Planets* he even gives a "census" of their inhabitants—the estimated population of Mars is 624,800,000, that of Jupiter 267,805,925,000. In a more rational mood he has this to say about the motive behind the interest in space travel: "Perhaps man's curiosity and his essential loneliness are what makes this eternal theme appealing."

Gerald Heard is no less bizarre and no less popular. He advises us in his book *Is Another World Watching?* to learn the language of the bees (the bees of Earth, that is) so that they will act as our intermediaries with the Martian bees who indubitably operate the flying saucers, and that they may propitiate those powerful creatures. His thoughts about space travel are similar to Heuer's: "We have lost our paranoid loneliness and dream of utter superiority. But we have found companions—yes, and possible guides—minds that have gone ahead of ours. Is not this 'good news' . . .?"

There is in this almost, to use a germane term, an extrapolation of the emotional climate that develops in aerial flying. Dr. Douglas D. Bond, in *The Love and Fear of Flying,* one of the most elaborate studies of the psychological problems in this area, puts it thus:

> Flying . . . has been associated with aspiration and freedom from the restrictions of earth or of reality. . . . Deeply rooted in man's mind is the idea that flying is a supernatural achievement: man has attributed it to both kind and unkind gods who have guarded the secret of flight from mortal encroachment and have punished with Icarian failure those so bold as to try. . . .
>
> Flying, in actuality, emphasizes an unreality that encourages fantasy. . . . The usual earthly qualities are dwarfed and tenuous and exercise a weaker hold. Flying . . . gives one a feeling of loneliness and newly found power that can hardly be matched in other pursuits.

The immense role which flying plays in the reality as well as in the fantasy life of our day can yet not cover up the fact that flying is a secondary means of locomotion and is bound to remain so until space travel becomes a reality. There is no spot in the world on which man can dwell which is in the exclusive realm of aviation—i.e., which can only be reached by flying.

The plane has in this respect never acquired the dignity of the ship. Man has used ships for thousands of years to accomplish voyages which he could not possibly undertake without ships. The heavenly bodies would be for the flying machine what the other shore has been for the ship. Spaceships alone would make flying for man what flying

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has been for the birds and what the ship, the wheel, and the horse have been for man in times past. It is this perhaps which has saved the literature of space travel from becoming the exclusive property of the lunatic fringe.

The contact points between psychopathology and the imaginative writing about space travel are, even so, not too scarce. The motive of space travel can be used as a potent release: once it is postulated, the rest can be left to free-floating imagination; in a world from which we are separated by the formidable barrier of space, neither the physical laws of our universe nor our moral laws have to be accorded validity. Both the psychotics who have imagined themselves in space and the science fiction writers who have produced stories of voyages to stars have made use of that liberty.

Looked at from this angle, though, it is astounding how little they have dared. They have carried the soil of the Earth on their soles to the most distant parts of the heavens. How timid they have been in stripping off the laws of Earth, how much allegiance to our prohibitions they have so faithfully preserved!

Arthur C. Clarke, who is known as a writer of tales, is also one of the ideologists of the science fiction movement. As chairman of the British Interplanetary Society (perhaps the very one that Lewis had in mind when he spoke of the "little" societies) he wrote *The Exploration of Space,* a best seller. This is the alluring prospectus that he unrolls before the eyes of future frontiersmen:

> The importance of planetary colonization will lie in the variety and diversity of cultures which it will make possible. . . . They will, of course . . . all be based on a very advanced technology. Yet though the interior of a colony on Pluto might be just like that of one on Mercury, the different external environments would inevitably shape the minds and outlooks of the inhabitants. It will be fascinating to see what effects this will have on human character, thought, and artistic creativeness.
>
> These things . . . may be of far more importance than its purely material benefits, considerable though these will undoubtedly be. . . . With the expansion of the world's mental horizon may come one of the greatest outbursts of creative energy ever known. The parallel with the renaissance. . . .
>
> Interplanetary travel is now the only form of "conquest and empire" compatible with civilization.

Shades of Raffles and Clive rather than of Helen, whose face would launch a thousand space ships, of Kipling rather than Homer! If Mainstreet, Ohio, looks like Mainstreet, Iowa, let's add a Mainstreet, Pto., and a Mainstreet, Mry. Since our empires of yesterday are one with Nineveh and Tyre, let's build new ones in the sky.

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Take a look at the empire builders. Some of them are crusty old commanders. But more frequently—and significantly—the hero is an up-and-coming young man, second in command under a Colonel Blimp type superior. He follows an enlightened progressive policy toward the natives, which his boss does not. Needless to say, he wins out in the end.

They all, the young and the old, the golden-haired youths and the martinets, are cogs in a gigantic military-administrative machine. The type of the adventurous hero who strikes out alone, who has freedom of action within the natural law and responsibility to none but himself and such higher powers as he believes in, this hero is for all practical purposes unknown. The parallel with the renaissance, indeed! The conqueror of galaxies relies on his weapons, his communication system, and the organization that will back him up. He may be assailed by monsters but not by doubts. His strength is as the strength of ten because his heart is sure.

These characteristics have been noted by the critics of science fiction. Philip Wylie, himself an author of some standing in this field, finds that the usual current story contains "wild adventure, wanton genocide on alien planets, gigantic destruction and a piddling phantasmagoria of impossible nonsense. One needs only to read the contents of half a dozen representative magazines and anthologies to recognize the fact."

Even Clarke, in his favorite role of elder statesman, counsels moderation:

> We have seen that there is little likelihood of encountering intelligence elsewhere in the Solar System. That contact may have to wait for the day, perhaps ages since, when we can reach the stars. But sooner or later it must come.
>
> There have been many portrayals in literature of these fateful meetings. Most science fiction writers, with characteristic lack of imagination, have used them as an excuse for stories of conflict and violence indistinguishable from those which stain the pages of our own history.

Lack of imagination? One wonders. "These fateful meetings" have emerged as the kingpin among the motifs of science fiction. All their science and all their space travel is scarcely more than a little system of devices to get the dramatis personae with a minimum of fuss to the time and place where they can meet—i.e., where our culture and an imagined alien culture will be face to face. The thought would be saddening but not perhaps entirely unreasonable that such a meeting, if it ever came, would indeed be more likely a clash, and that it is perhaps the illusion that it could be otherwise which really betrays lack of imagination.

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This is at least true when we think of the idea which forms the basis of the typical colonization plot: the idea that mankind will develop space travel and will encounter an alien civilization somewhere on a distant heavenly body, and that the ghastly drama of galactic imperialism will unfold. But the pattern can be, and sometimes is, reversed.

The even more uncanny possibility can be envisaged that there are races living somewhere in the universe who are superior to us; that we will not discover them but that they will discover us. This has the charm of novelty, for the opposite is based on historical precedent: we have never been able to forget, try as we may, the appalling sagas of Cortez and Pizarro. History does not tell us what would have become of us if the Aztecs or the Incas had happened to have more effective weapons than the Europeans and if they had landed in Spain.

It is this version of the motif of the meeting which has stirred the popular fantasy especially powerfully. The idea has found its classical expression in H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* and in its half tragic and half burlesque sequel, Orson Welles's famed broadcast in 1938. A less dramatic but much more sustained mass hysteria has since then been achieved by the flying saucers.

The spokesmen of space travel claim, straight-faced, that their literature is a reflection and pace-setter of science. Since they obviously have something different in mind than what is usually meant by "science," they have some explaining to do. They do it.

J. O. Bailey in *Pilgrims through Space and Time,* one of the few sizeable scientific studies on the subject, notes as one of the developments that have led to the modern state of affairs "a tendency to employ science fiction to explore psychological, moral, ethical, and even metaphysical problems." John W. Campbell Jr., editor of *Astounding Science Fiction,* the most renowned magazine in the field, says in his introduction to an anthology culled from its pages: "Science fiction, in its earliest days, considered the machine. In its adolescence, it considers the effect of the machine and of technology on Man. And in its more mature form it considers Man's proper relationship to Man and the Universe." There used to be a belief that this consideration was the concern of philosophy or religion, but that does not faze the spaceman. Villiers Gerson, in a book review in the *New York Times,* put the same idea into a more limited frame: "It is interesting to note how stories written since 1945 have forsworn gadgetry to emphasize the relationship between human beings and the parahuman life forms which they encounter in space."

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Why should science fiction have forsworn "gadgetry" since 1945? There is one plausible explanation: For people who are sincerely concerned about the fate of mankind—as many of these writers, for all their antics, certainly are—science has changed its role since that fateful year. Its centuries-long honeymoon with mankind is over. Science is again, as in the day of the alchemists and the necromancers, awesome, threatening, uncanny, sinister. Bards of old sat in the shade of sacred trees for inspiration. Those who sing the epic of today sit in the vast shadow cast by the toadstool of Hiroshima.

It is as pathetic as it is fascinating to see these writers forever circling, like Lady Macbeth, around the fact that it was the United States which dropped the first atomic bomb. All the perfumes of the planet New Arabia in Galaxy X will not sweeten their little hands.

Writers of other nations, naturally, do not have these special qualms. Ernst Juenger, the distinguished German writer, has perfected fantasies which contain quite a bit of science fiction (even a little space travel) and which are replete with horrors. His unlaid ghosts are not atomic bombs but civil wars, torture chambers, tyrannical government with all its deviltry—— It is thus that History lays a different burden on each man's conscience.

Science could help to carry it, but science in the traditional sense of the word has become a potentially hostile power, never again to be trusted. Its prestige, however, is far from diminishing. So science it must be, and if the interest has shifted, it must be shifted in the name of science—to psychology, sociology, parapsychology, anything, as long as it is science and the stories that reflect it can be called science fiction.

A body of fiction which would "extrapolate" psychology or sociology, which would stand in the same relation to these sciences in which Jules Verne's work stood to physical science, would not be a bad idea at that. The trouble is that the tenets of that special psychology or sociology are peculiar ones.

Schiller, considering "Man's proper relationship to Man and the Universe," wrote that until the philosophers take over, Nature keeps the world going round *durch Hunger und durch Liebe*. He meant to state an axiom, a commonplace; little did he know that a century and a half later his famous epigram would sound like a new, but doubtful discovery, that systems would be erected in which hunger and love are unusual phenomena.

That hunger plays so little role in the imagined spaces should surprise no one. Modern science fiction is after all an American development. The writers may not be affluent (their magazines scarcely pay

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enough for that), but being American they can hardly ever have felt dire material need. They extend their experience, or lack of such, rather blithely. Their spacemen don't worry where their next meal will be coming from—in fact, they rarely worry where anything will be coming from. Such insouciance does not reflect penetrating economic understanding on the part of their authors, but then, this is not the first time that blindness to the economic foundations of our society has actually been raised to the rank of a virtue.

The absence of love is something that gives more reason to pause and think. Even sex hardly operates in those stories as a motive. It is true enough that some of the space heroes have wives, some have girl friends, and that as likely as not the hero will in the end marry the heroine (usually in the brash and nonchalant manner which is so characteristic of "popular" fiction). However, the reader cannot easily shake off the impression that these heroes wear their sexual desires as they wear their clothes: not because they need them but because it wouldn't do to be seen in public without them. In the era of the Kinsey Report it might attract suspicion if they were too openly asexual.

In a world kept going round by hunger and by love these spacemen would be misfits. But of course, our trusty intergalactic field drive has taken us far away from such a world. The way current science fiction reads sociology and psychology, the world is kept going round by satiety and hate.

Future historians will perhaps refer to our era as the age of the return of the gods of the underworld. Realism is a comparatively new invention. In dealing with the riddle of Man, our science (psychoanalysis; sociology, such as it is) and our art (surrealism; abstract painting) have left their earlier concern with faithful reproduction of the surface far behind. It is the magma underneath which they are trying to explore. Science fiction has similarly abandoned its former interest in what is conventionally known as science, and has taken root directly in that hot and ugly subsoil in which there is no grace, no smile, no justice, and no reason—nothing but vitality.

The patterns of space travel literature are remarkably similar to certain configurations of psychotic fantasies; and even more so to typical aspirations and fears, which, unrecognized and unadmitted as yet, have become important elements of our emotional climate.

The evidence to support the claim that science fiction is a reflection and an outgrowth of our present culture is not found where it is usually sought—in the alleged predilection of science fiction for those

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topics that are burning issues in the scientific life of the day. The relationship is less obvious and more intimate. It has materialized in the favorite motifs which are ubiquitous in science fiction and potentially ubiquitous in other manifestations of our culture.

There are motifs of *Weltanschauung*—certain ideas as to what the world is like and what its meaning may be—and volitional motifs—the expression of desires and fears. Outstanding among the latter are the yearning to escape from the confining bounds of the Earth: from its choking reality and its drab restrictions; the longing for a new and greater frontier—with all that this implies in variety and impunity; the desire, finally, for an extension of Man and his works—for longevity, however specious, for immortality whatever its price.

The *Weltanschauung* which pervades much of the space travel literature all but ignores the traditional concepts of the fundamental laws and drives, and makes bold to supersede cherished sets of values. The spaces in which those stories are set are often but thinly disguised replicas of the arena in which the global activities of the United States are unfolding and will unfold in the near future. Yet the heroes are often seen as thoroughly jaded, and their one appetite that is not blunted is aggression. Held to its course by neither physical nor moral law, their world tumbles from one catastrophe into the next.[1] A good time is had by the tough ones who survive for a while. They owe their toughness to the armor which is supplied by organization; by hierarchical yet fluid, aggressive, humorless and merciless organization.

If we try to strike a balance of values, we find in the one scale the liveliness and modernity of science fiction, the unencumbered freshness of its imagination, its ability to come to grips, by the very device of gaining distance, with the less ephemeral aspects of the problems that plague us (surely there is something to be said for the idea of looking at the Cold War, for instance, from the vantage point of a remote star). It is hard to see how we can advance human society unless we experiment in thought with the various possibilities of its development.

The other scale is heavily weighted with negatives: Hostility unrestrained by love; brash young men in the service of super-imperial schemes; devouring clashes of incompatible civilizations—these are the laws and the prophets that the authors of space travel stories have projected onto the heavenly bodies. May our lucky stars prevent them from ever becoming reality on our old Earth.

1 Disintegration and reintegration, removal from the community of the living, impersonation and depersonalization, mind reading, telepathy, and influencing machines are other significant motifs which I do not have the space to discuss.

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Hans Meyerhoff

FREUD AND THE AMBIGUITY OF CULTURE

If nothing else is gained from the re-evaluation of Freud in the series of celebrations at the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth, it may be the correction, long overdue, of what can only be called a scientific myth: to wit, that he neglected or disregarded cultural factors in the analysis of psychological phenomena. This was said of a man who began with, and invariably returned to, the basic proposition that the drama of the self, depicting the vicissitudes of the libido, is always acted out against a family background; who as early as 1908, wrote a long essay on the effect of cultural repression upon mental illness; who, in his later writings, addressed himself almost exclusively to cultural problems and insisted that all psychology was group psychology (*i.e.*, the psychology of "interpersonal relations"): and who, in the last great summary and revision of his thinking (*New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*), stated flatly that there were only two branches of science, the human sciences, *i.e.*, "psychology, pure and applied," and the natural sciences. "Whatever he may mean to the people who deal professionally with culture," Trilling (*Freud and the Crisis of Our Culture*) observes correctly, "for the layman Freud is likely to be the chief proponent of the whole cultural concept. . . . His psychology involves culture in its very essence—it tells us that the surrogates of culture are established in the mind itself, that the development of the individual mind recapitulates the development of culture."

Psychoanalysis, however, is a cultural discipline in a more specific sense: Freud was also a philosopher of culture; and there is a more or less articulate philosophy of culture, history and man behind the scientific structure of psychoanalysis. Freud turned to these philosophical reflections late and reluctantly; but it is precisely these philosophical issues which were responsible for the differences between himself and the post-Freudian dissenters of various persuasions. It was an odd delusion on their part to charge a thinker more deeply steeped than themselves in the heritage of history with blindness to the effect of social influences upon human life. The charge, I think, was a form of self-

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delusion; for the "cultural schools" have either overlooked or concealed the fact that their deviations involved, not a rediscovery, but a reinterpretation of culture. It was a reinterpretation of the meaning of culture, the nature of man, the function of religion, and the place of morality along traditional and inspirational lines.

Dissent and defection, therefore, always involved what Stanley Edgar Hyman calls "philosophic disagreement" ("Freud and the Climate of Tragedy," PR, Spring 1956). Freud himself saw this and said so in response to the first modifications of the libido theory by C. G. Jung. As in the case of any scientific system, it is only natural to expect that the basic concepts of psychoanalysis will be revised in the light of logical adequacy and experimental tests; and many workers in the field are constantly engaged in this task of improving the scientific status and validity of psychoanalytic theory. I suspect, however, that, despite these improvements, the final judgment about psychoanalysis will not be rendered on scientific grounds alone; for as a system of ideas about man's fate and history, psychoanalysis is more than a scientific system. A response to such a system depends, not only upon the logical status and experimental verification of its theoretical concepts, but also upon one's personal estimate of the philosophical, moral, and social implications of the system. In short, one's total response includes an ineluctably subjective element: cognitive and emotive factors, reason and character are jointly engaged in the process of verification. And that, for better or worse, is philosophy—not in the academic sense of making a living, but in the old-fashioned sense of providing a *Weltanschauung*.

I

Ambiguity, I believe, is an essential category in the philosophy of psychoanalysis. It refers to what Ernest Jones, in the second volume of his new biography, has called Freud's "constant proclivity to dualistic ideas—the interaction of opposites, the synthesis and dissolution of antithetical concepts"; but this "obstinate dualism" is of a dynamic kind; it is, as Hartmann says, "a very characteristic kind of dialectical thinking." The "interaction of opposite powers" involves a constant, dynamic process. And any resolution of this dynamic interaction in history and in man is always temporary, tentative, and precarious; in short, ambiguous.

Riesman has analyzed the dialectical ambiguity of work and play, freedom and authority, heroism and weakness "in the structure of Freud's thought" (*Selected Essays from Individualism Reconsidered*). Trilling's essay, mentioned above, is a literary commentary upon "the

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interaction of biology and culture in the fate of man." Hyman's recent article in PR, which must be applauded as a brilliant tribute to the centennial celebrations, proceeded from the same premise to develop the thesis that "the writings of Sigmund Freud once again make a tragic view possible for the modern mind." Herbert Marcuse's book, *Eros and Civilization*,[1] is perhaps the most exhaustive and penetrating study yet undertaken of the tragic "dialectic of civilization."

Culture, according to Freud, is a product of three independent variables: (1) necessity (*Ananke*) imposed by nature; (2) the instinctual polarity in man: love and death (Eros and Thanatos) ultimately fused in the "seething cauldron" of the id; and (3) the institutions and ideals developed by society. The "dialectic of civilization" is a function of the interaction of these three variables. Culture—like the individual ego—is a precarious, unstable compound because the process of synthesizing and reconciling these three components is never complete, final and successful. If, as Géza Róheim has said, in *The Origin and Function of Culture*, "civilization is a series of institutions evolved for the sake of security," then this security system is constantly threatened by explosive and destructive tendencies in the three partners. Nature imposes harsh necessities which may never be completely mastered. The instincts may break out in open or subversive revolt against the repressions imposed by society. And the ideological superstructure may crush man because it is unbearable and unworkable.

More specifically, Freud envisaged the dialectical struggle as "a battle between the Titans" Eros and Thanatos, or as a result of the insoluble quest to press these two "heavenly forces" into service on behalf of a satisfactory and lasting social adaptation against the background of a neutral or hostile environment. This quest is never-ending; for Eros is reluctant to complete the cultural task which it has begun in the family, and Thanatos always threatens to destroy the cultural achievements wrested from a reluctant Eros. Worse: in the process of acculturation, Eros loses ground against the forces of destruction. For culture must transform both instincts; it must domesticate them (by displacement and sublimation) to achieve both a greater mastery over nature and a more secure gratification of the instincts in interpersonal relations. Unfortunately, it can accomplish this task only at a price; and the price we pay for the cultural achievements accounts for the feeling of "discontent" running through the history of civilization. In Freud's own words (*Civilization and Its Discontents*): "The price of progress in civilization is paid in forfeiting happiness through the heightening of a sense of guilt."

1 Beacon Press. $3.00.

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The sense of guilt is "the most important problem in the evolution of culture." Its origins lie in the perennial revolt against the mythical father and in the establishment of the first tabus in the primitive society of the brother clan. This mythical prototype of the origin of civilization served Freud as the basis for the crucial assertion that "that which began in relation to the father ends in relation to the community." In other words, all cultural systems reflect "the conflict of ambivalence, the eternal struggle between Eros and the destructive instinct," originally felt toward the mythical father image. Culture has devised a precarious resolution of this ambivalence. It checks the destructive impulse by turning it inward where it is then discharged, as a sense of guilt or moral anxiety, against the individual himself. As the libidinal ties were extended "from the group of the family to the group of humanity," a process for which the impossible moral command, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," is the most conspicuous symbol in Western culture, the cycle of repression, guilt, and anxiety was repeated through countless generations. And "the feelings of guilt . . . were reinforced" by each successive resolution of the original conflict, or by the increasing need to internalize aggressive and destructive tendencies in the form of a vigilant conscience. Thus the super-ego is progressively strengthened in the course of history; and the destructive elements, in man and society, gain at the expense of Eros.

Culture, then, is both a blessing and a curse; and it is both throughout the history of civilized man. Human history is a record of this ambiguity: a repetitive cycle of progress and regression, revolt and repression, achievement and failure, stability and upheaval, security and insecurity, liberation and enslavement. And unless we bring the unconscious "ambivalence" behind the cultural process into full consciousness and design appropriate precautionary measures to deal with it adequately, Freud was inclined to think—this is his pessimistic, tragic view of life—that man's fate was likely to be sealed by the "immortal adversary" of Eros.

Culture occupied so dominant a place in Freud's mind that he not only assigned to it—all "cultural" dissenters to the contrary—a crucial part in the causal analysis of neuroses, but even compared it (like Plato) to an "organic process" of its own, independent of all the factors contributing to it. Along these lines, he envisaged the ideal of a "true social science" which would "show in detail how these different factors—the general human instinctual disposition, its racial variations, and its cultural modifications—behave under the influence of varying social organization, professional activities and methods of subsistence" (*New Introductory Lectures*). Moreover, he raised the interesting ques-

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tion of whether we could not study the "cultural super-ego" as an independent social agency and thus apply psychoanalysis to the pathology of whole cultures. He presently warned, however, that such an undertaking would encounter serious difficulties. For in the case of an individual neurosis, we have a fixed, though arbitrary and conventional, standard of "reality" by which we are guided in the therapeutic situation. It is the cultural pattern itself "which we assume to be 'normal'." No such standard of comparison would be available in dealing with the neurosis of a whole culture.

II

This hint thrown out at the end of *Civilization and its Discontents* has produced a spate of studies on the pathology of cultures—German, Russian, Japanese, English, French, and American. None of them, I think, has been able to avoid the danger against which Freud warned wisely. All of them have blithely proceeded on the doubtful assumption that there is a *cultural* standard of "normalcy" against which we can measure and evaluate deviations. The latest study in this direction is Erich Fromm's book *The Sane Society*.[2] In *Escape From Freedom,* Fromm attempted to diagnose the pathology of totalitarianism; *The Sane Society* is his contribution to the pathology of democratic capitalism. There is much in this analysis, particularly in the long fifth chapter called "Man in Capitalistic Society," which is first-rate social psychology; but in this survey I wish to concentrate only upon the over-all philosophical perspective from which the book is written. For *The Sane Society* is a most instructive document for clarifying, once and for all, (1) the differences between the "cultural schools" of psychoanalysis and Freud's approach to culture, and (2) the social and philosophical implications of these differences.

Fromm's concept of culture is in the tradition of Marx and Freud. Only instead of using terms like "ideological superstructure" or "cultural super-ego," he introduces the notion of a "social character," which he has used in previous books. It is the characterological counterpart of the cultural super-ego in that it refers to those character traits and attitudes which people have in common by virtue of the fact that they live in the same society. Similarly, Fromm's explanation of neurosis, whether individual or social, is quite traditional. A neurosis is, roughly speaking, the result of a severe conflict between the social character (*i.e.,* cultural super-ego), on the one hand, and basic human drives, on the other. What

2 Rinehart. $5.00.

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is new in Fromm's system is the nature and function of these drives. Instead of Eros and Thanatos, Fromm postulates five basic needs: the need for freedom, the need for rootedness, the need for transcendence, the need for identity, and the need for a frame of orientation and devotion. Next, the dynamic principles according to which these needs interact with nature and culture are highly simplified as compared with the complex dynamic processes by which Freud tried to account for the bewildering vicissitudes of the libido. In fact, instead of dynamic interaction, we find a simple, static polarity. Each drive has a dual goal—sacred and profane. Thus there are five ideal goals: love; freedom; brotherhood; individuality; and a rational religion. They represent a way of life through which man realizes himself and finds health and happiness. Correspondingly, there are five negative goals; they represent a way of life through which man falls into alienation and neurosis. The ideal goals, of course, are good; the negative goals, evil. These are the psychological foundations for what Fromm has called "normative humanism."

It is obvious that Fromm does not introduce a new cultural perspective; but he does replace Freud's psychological apparatus, its topological, dynamic, and economic principles, by a different psychological theory. And he does this for a normative purpose; *i.e.,* to lay down specific rules for "good" and "bad" solutions of the human situation. A good solution corresponds to a "sane society." In such a society, the ideal goals of human needs and the social structure are so adjusted to each other that they produce mental health. *Per contra,* a society which thwarts and perverts man's inherent striving for mental health is "insane," even though its members may not know it. Mental health "is the *same* for man in *all* ages and *all* cultures" (italics mine). It consists of a remarkable composite of virtues in line with the ideal goals; for it "is characterized by the ability to love and to create, by a sense of identity based on one's experience of self as the subject and agent of one's powers, by the grasp of reality inside and outside of ourselves, that is, by the development of objectivity and reason." It is obviously not easy to enjoy mental health; but citing numerous authorities from Ikhnaton to Jesus, Fromm believes that his own definition "coincides essentially with the norms postulated by the great spiritual teachers of the human race"—as if they had ever been able to agree with each other.

Thus we get a sharp, clear-cut division between light and darkness, between good and evil, between normalcy and neurosis, between health and disease, between happiness and misery, between self-realization and alienation. And we have achieved the objective of eliminating the con-

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cept of ambiguity from Freud's analysis of the interaction of culture and personality. Culture is not necessarily Janus-faced; according to Fromm, it may well smile on all of us with a benign and benevolent face. Instead of doubt, we get reassurance; instead of ambiguity, inspiration; and Freud's subtle irony makes way for the voice of prophecy.

It must be said that Fromm's voice is one of the sanest in the siren songs of neo-Freudian revisionists. There is much that is attractive in his blueprint for a sane society, which he calls "communitarian socialism"; but these are details which, again, must be set aside. In general, the reforms he advocates are in the tradition of humanitarian socialist thinkers as set forth, say, in Buber's *Paths in Utopia*. Yet, curiously enough, the elaborate psychological apparatus yields results which, on the whole, are rather commonplace or ideological. They are commonplace in that they ultimately amount to saying something like this: if only we go to work and set our house in order, *i.e.*, improve and reform social institutions and ideologies, the world will be a better place to live in. They are ideological in that the justification for this faith does not, or need not, come from any psychological knowledge in depth, but from an acceptance of the traditional wisdom of religious prophets. "Fromm," as Marcuse puts it sharply, "revives all the time-honored values of idealistic ethics as if nobody had ever demonstrated their conformist and repressive features." Fromm[3] has objected to this charge: if "ideal goals" like love, integrity, maturity, etc. are said to be ideological, would the critic also rule out terms like hate, destructiveness, sadism as ideological language? This defense does not meet the issue head-on for the crucial point is what the ideal goals mean in Fromm's vocabulary. And, as we shall see presently, they mean what they have always meant in religious and moral discourse. Hence, the psychological foundations which Fromm employs for his critique of society cannot go beyond the traditional interpretations of these ideal goals.

This is not true of Freud. Even a brief indication of his thinking on reform, revolution, and conservatism helps to throw his approach to these problems into sharp contrast with Fromm's. Freud spoke in favor of "reforms" at least along three general lines: (1) sexual morality; (2) economic injustice; and (3) technological progress. But in addition to these reformist tendencies, Freud's thinking is "revolutionary" at least in two respects: First, he believed that reforms were patchwork "without altering the foundations of the whole system." Secondly, he

3 See the controversy between Fromm and Marcuse conducted in the pages of *Dissent* (Summer and Autumn 1955, Winter 1956).

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believed, rightly or wrongly, that any culture can and must always be weighed against the demands made on behalf of man's libidinal life—the gratifications and frustrations of which constitute man's inalienable rights against the demands imposed by society. Both of these revolutionary aspects of Freud's thought are conspicuously absent in Fromm's system as they are in any other system of inspirational psychoanalysis. *Per contra,* one can search far and wide in Freud's works and will not find that he leans on the authority of scripture—whether religious, moral, or political. That Freud remained a "conservative" despite these revolutionary implications of his thought is well known. Aside from temperament, he was conservative because he was deeply convinced (a) that an intractable Adam dwelled in the instinctual life of man, (b) that the instincts obeyed a "conservative" principle of their own, and (c) that they were called upon to perform impossible and insoluble tasks on behalf of human culture.

III

The theme of Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* is the instincts at war with culture. It is called "a philosophical inquiry into Freud," which will cause misgivings in circles distrustful of philosophical speculation divorced from clinical experience and practical therapy. Others more open to their metaphysical commitments may agree with Kluckhohn's judgment that, with the exception of the two volumes by Ernest Jones, Marcuse's book is "the most significant general treatment of psychoanalytic theory since Freud himself ceased publication." The treatment is "orthodox" in that Marcuse accepts Freud's "dialectic of civilization" and outlines his own solution of the problem against the background of Freud's metapsychology. Thus, in content and spirit, this approach differs sharply from any variety of neo-Freudian revisionism.

The contrast is particularly striking when we consider the different meanings which Fromm and Marcuse assign to the same terms. Both use "alienation" as their point of departure—thus indicating that both bring the influence of Hegel and Marx to a study of Freud. But both mean very different things by the same concept. For Fromm "alienation" means that man living in a capitalistic society is debased in his "true" nature, his essential humanity, which refers to the realization of the ideal goals and spiritual values mentioned above. Marcuse, on the other hand, takes Freud's hint that alienation means "alienation from instincts," and that the reconditioning of our machines, both cultural and personal, should begin and end with a liberation and transformation

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of the instinctual life. Similarly, both men assign entirely different meanings to the crucial concepts believed to lead beyond alienation. For example, "freedom" in Fromm refers to a highly sublimated and special kind of "inner" freedom as it did, say, for Spinoza. Marcuse uses the term with reference to the instincts unfolding without repression by social customs and norms. Again, "love" in Marcuse's vocabulary designates Freud's Eros with a full and unequivocal recognition of the manifold sexual components of the instinct. Fromm uses the word again in a highly attenuated, aim-inhibited sense: "productive love" is a composite of care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge—but does not include sex. It is well to remember in philosophical controversies[4] that two writers can use the same words and speak an entirely different language.

Yet, despite these differences, Marcuse's essay marks another attempt to resolve the ambiguity which Freud read into the history of human culture. Marcuse, too, is a utopian thinker; he, too, envisages a realm of freedom in which the most distinctive features of Freud's thought, the precariousness, openness, insecurity, and tragedy of man's fate in culture, are laid to eternal rest. In contrast to Fromm and other neo-Freudian writers, however, Marcuse embarks upon such a utopian blueprint by accepting two basic premises of Freud's own analysis of culture: (1) the biological theory of instincts; (2) the nature of culture as an instrument of repression. If there is to be a leap into freedom, it must, therefore, be envisaged as the transcendence of the concept of culture in general, as a repudiation of *all* historical manifestations and justifications of repression, domination, and exploitation of man in society.

Such a project is "in a strict sense 'unreasonable'." It involves two assumptions: first, that we revise the prevailing concept of reason; secondly, that we assign to Freud's analysis of culture only an historical validity. The ordinary meaning of reason in science and society is for Marcuse, as it was for Scheler, a form of *Herrschaftswissen.* Its primary function has been to gain mastery over nature and man; hence, it is a type of rationality which is itself subservient to the ideas of conquest, domination, and repression. In the name of freedom, therefore, it must be opposed by a different kind of reason, which Marcuse finds in art. Next, he believes that Freud's pessimistic diagnosis of culture reflects an historical, not a universal necessity. To be sure, every major civilization seems to exhibit the same pattern of authority, repression, and

4 See note, p. 123.

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guilt; but these characteristics, according to Marcuse, are still historical accidents because he attributes them to the special conditions which have so far prevailed in the evolution of human culture: the necessity to master a recalcitrant nature and the necessary sacrifices imposed upon the reluctant instincts to perfect a system of security against want and fear. The moment these special conditions cease to operate it may be possible to reverse the inexorable march of unreason through history. This moment has arrived. Our culture has reached a level of technological perfection and material abundance which, as Marx predicted long ago, would enable us to suspend and supersede the repressive, irrational solutions of the fateful "dialectic of civilization." It has put within our grasp the prospect of a "free" and "rational" society—even though this prospect must appear utopian and unreasonable from the perspective of the ideas of freedom and reason developed by a repressive culture.

Since the leap into freedom is not forthcoming, there must be special conditions at work which prevent it. Marcuse singles out two such conditions, which he calls surplus repression and the performance principle, respectively. By "surplus repression" he means the social restrictions and forms of exploitation necessitated, not by the natural struggle for survival, but by the historical struggle for power and domination in society. By the "performance principle" he means the type of work necessitated, not by need and use, but by the competitive, acquisitive features of a capitalistic economy. Marcuse concludes that Freud's analysis of culture is predicated upon a misreading of the reality principle in the light of surplus repression and excess performance. More precisely, it is a correct reading of the historical record, but a false extrapolation from it. According to Marcuse, the historical curse can at last be lifted from man's soul because surplus repression and the performance principle are no longer necessary for survival and social adaptation.

Unlike Fromm, Marcuse does not see the vague breaking of a new dawn in political economy or religion, but in the aesthetic dimension. His prophets are Novalis, Baudelaire, Proust, Gide, Rilke, Valéry, and all the others who have chosen art as a way of life. It is their vision which has always held a mirror up to human nature—and shown it to be disfigured by a repressive, irrational reality. Marcuse invokes the mythical figures of Orpheus and Narcissus as archetypes for the aesthetic vision and as perennial reminders of "The Great Refusal" to serve reality and reason at the price of libidinal freedom and pleasure. Freud himself had specifically excluded "fantasy" from the universal reign of the reality principle in the adult ego; but, on the whole, he

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tended to think of the products of fantasy and imagination, in the normal adult as well as in the special case of the artist, as harmless play, as delightful escapes into an illusory world, as pleasing anodynes against the harshness and frustrations of life.

Drawing upon the humanistic idealism of Kant and Schiller, Marcuse enlarges the meaning of play and art so that they may become the tools for building a new world beyond history: *là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, luxe, calme, et volupté.* He insists, as do other critics of Freud, that art is more than a harmless illusion or substitute gratification. The creative imagination caught in the works of art makes a *cognitive* claim upon the individual by confronting him with "truths" about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness which are buried under the debris of an ugly social reality and a repressive scientific rationality. Play has a reality-testing function (Riesman). Moreover, play is self-determined or self-regulative. It creates its own pattern and structure in the process of transforming intrapsychic energy. Structure, organization, and sublimation emerge spontaneously from the instinctual sources which are absorbed in playful activity; they are not imposed from the outside by social rules or natural necessity.

This argument is crucial for Marcuse's version of a libidinal aestheticism. In a long and difficult chapter called "The Transformation of Sexuality into Eros," he sets out to show that as in play, so in sex, the impulse or psychic energy behind the activity may and will develop, as part of its own dynamics, certain self-inhibiting and self-denying mechanisms—even, and especially, when the impulse is liberated from the traditional cultural super-ego and its repressive features. Thus checks and balances generated by the instinct itself will sustain the cultural process beyond its present liberation. Only the cultural process will then be nourished by displacements and sublimations under the aegis of a liberated id, instead of under the destructive and painful tyranny of the traditional super-ego. Taking a cue from Róheim, Marcuse envisages the prospect of libidinal freedom as a reversal of the traditional dynamics of the cultural process. Instead of a hostile and anxiety-ridden super-ego wresting valuable ground from the id, the id will, as it were, break through and flood both ego and super-ego with libidinal energy. The result of this great reversal will be twofold: (1) There will come about what Marcuse calls an "erotization of the total personality," *i.e.*, a rediscovery on the mature, adult level of the polymorphous-perverse state of sexuality which Freud attributed to early infancy; and (2) there will come about an "erotization" of social relations, including the working conditions still required to maintain a state of material abundance.

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In both respects, Marcuse believes such an "unreasonable" project would provide genuine liberation—as against the pseudo-freedom of the inspirational schools of psychoanalysis—and the basis for resolving, once and for all, the fateful ambiguity of culture and man which Freud postulated on the grounds of the irreconcilable conflict between happiness and guilt.

IV

These ideas, obviously, represent an original and challenging contribution to the body of psychoanalytic thought. They also raise a great many questions; e.g., about the function of art, the nature of instincts, the interaction of culture and personality, and so on. We cannot discuss these problems; but we may ask in conclusion: Does this ideal of a libidinal aestheticism achieve the objective of solving the cultural equation which Freud believed to be insoluble? It is, I think, doubtful that it does; or insofar as it brings about a resolution of the ambiguity inherent in Freud's analysis of culture, it does so by shifting the problem to another level. For the problem apparently solved within the context of Freud's dichotomy between the instincts and their historical vicissitudes, between the pleasure principle and a culturally conditioned reality principle, reappears, I am afraid, as the dilemma between historical reality and utopia. All human and cultural reality is under the governance of time. Utopias being "timeless" constructions cannot incorporate this temporal dimension into their own system. Worse: they cannot establish a meaningful connection between their own system beyond time and the social reality in time. They cannot and do not answer the fatal question: what difference will the passage of time make to the realization of the utopian ideal? In short, any utopian vision is tainted by the spot of the transition period; and the damned spot will not rub off—not even with the help of art. Maybe time does come to a stop in the "timeless" images caught in aesthetic expression; but in this respect, at least, art reveals its illusory nature; for we cannot reify the eternal moments of art and incorporate them into the historical and social world which is always subject to changes in time.

Thus it is inevitable that in Marcuse's essay, as in any utopian construction, the human dilemma reappears in the form of the irreconcilable gap between the historical situation, on the one hand, and the leap into freedom beyond history, on the other. In the concrete terms of our own situation, this means that the liberation of Eros would and must take place under the conditions of a highly advanced technological

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civilization and under the governance of a pleasure principle developed by this civilization. What this would look like is difficult to predict. But it is at least an open question, all gloomy critics notwithstanding, whether the pleasure principle is not now celebrating undreamt-of triumphs in The Brave New World of T.V. Murphy. And whatever view we take "in the long run," when, in Keynes' phrase, we'll all be dead, it is undeniable, I think, that the very technological and historical conditions which make it possible for us to envisage an age of abundance, freedom, and love will and must influence the cultural face of this future. It is surely a safe lesson of history that a great many other factors, beside the self-regulating mechanisms that may (or may not) unfold within the instincts, will condition man's passage to a new world.

Thus the aesthetic dimension cannot bridge the crucial gap either—if for no other reason than that society is not a work of art. We can never wipe the canvas clean and start all over again as much as we dream of it; we can never remake ourselves or history out of entirely new cloth. The prophetic visions of rebirth, resurrection, and the new life in eternity are, ultimately, illusory phantasms, born of an undying faith in the omnipotence of thought and nourished by the romantic longings of the perennial child in man.[5] By contrast, Freud's recognition of an ineluctable ambiguity in man's quest to master nature, social relations, and himself appears much more "realistic" in that it is based on a sober estimate of the record of human history and personal experience verifiable in our own lives. This recognition, as we have seen, did not prevent Freud from taking a stand against surplus repression and alienation; but it did save him from saying that the historical ambiguity of man and his culture would ever be resolved permanently. For that we not only know too little—but too much.

Ambiguity runs as a persistent theme through the structure of Freud's thought. Culture is an ambiguous, unstable compound just as the ego is an ambiguous, precarious organization. Mental health and normality are flexible, relative, and ambiguous terms, not clear-cut propositions dividing the children of light from the children of darkness. *A fortiori,* the notions of a "good" life or a "good" society are

5 There is, of course, the phenomenon of genuine religious conversions; but their effects are notoriously neutral in the balance sheet of history. They are usually confined to the individual—in which case he is "reborn" as a new man "within," *i.e.,* either participates in the social scene as before or becomes an outcast from society (guru, hermit, monk). On the other hand, when religious conversions have changed the course of history (as in the case of Constantine, Mohammed, or Luther), the "dialectic of civilization" has not been affected by them.

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even more variable and ambiguous. All popular distortions of Freudianism to the contrary, there is no royal road to happiness, there is no single, unequivocal meaning that can be attached to this elusive term. It has been the objective of all inspirational schools of psychoanalysis to eliminate this disturbing note of ambiguity from Freud's thought. It is disturbing because it is, among other things, a blow to our personal and cultural narcissism; for (a) it does not enable us to read the progression of history as "progress," (b) it does not enable us to feel superior, in our own cultural super-ego, to that of other periods in history, and (c) it does not provide consolation and/or salvation. And that, as Freud wrote, is "at bottom what they all demand—the frenzied revolutionary as passionately as the most pious believer."

The inspirational schools of psychoanalysis have come along to supply this demand. All of them, interestingly enough, have retained a dualistic conceptual scheme inherited from Freud: the conflict between inferiority and superiority (Adler); the polarities of personal and collective, introvert and extrovert, anima and animus (Jung); the movements away from, against, and toward (Horney); the distinction between existential and historical dichotomies (Fromm). All of them, however, have maintained that there is a way out of these dichotomies, that there is an unambiguous resolution of inner conflicts, or that there is an unequivocal meaning of integration, self-realization, freedom, health, and happiness. Thus all of them have ended up by giving moral and inspirational instruction, which is sold in a more popular and effective dosage by the Reverend Peale. In all of them, therefore, this movement away from Freud returns to an ideology of adjustment and salvation which is in line with the religion and ethics of a culture in despair. It is this compulsive pursuit of certainty and consolation which distinguishes their structure of thought more radically from Freud's than any specific difference in theory or therapy.

For Freud did not provide religious inspiration—nor did he take utopian leaps. Instead, he professed Socratic ignorance about the ultimate issues of life and happiness and courageously adhered to a philosophical outlook subtly poised on ambiguity and irony. If one would dare hope for the future, he might wish that such a *Weltanschauung* might still make an appeal to future generations when the current wave of inspirational psychoanalysis has spent itself because it is no longer necessary.

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BOOKS

MODERN POETRY: THE AMERICAN ACCENT

THE CRITERION BOOK OF MODERN AMERICAN VERSE. Edited with an introduction by W. H. Auden. Criterion. $5.00.
LIKE A BULWARK. By Marianne Moore. Viking. $2.50.
HOMAGE TO MISTRESS BRADSTREET. By John Berryman. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $3.75.
THE PERSIMMON TREE. By Peter Viereck. Scribner's. $3.00.
POETS OF TODAY, III: THE FLOATING WORLD AND OTHER POEMS. By Lee Anderson. MY FATHER'S BUSINESS AND OTHER POEMS. By Spencer Brown. THE GREEN TOWN: POEMS. By Joseph Langland. Scribner's. $3.95.
TALKING BRONCO. By Roy Campbell. Regnery. $2.50.

Auden's anthology, for an English reader like myself who already knows and likes American poetry, is pleasant reminders rather than new discoveries. It perhaps begins too early: Edwin Arlington Robinson is a very fine poet, large, ruminative, salty, but he belongs in my mind in a leisurely lost world, somewhere between Browning and Hardy, rather than with "the modern movement." His very amplitude, and his patient interest in the quirks of individual character, presuppose a security we lost long ago; a world where people had time to read long poems, and discuss the ideas in them, and to turn from that to talk about their neighbors. Again, I think Auden puts in much too much comic verse, though certainly the Americans are good at it. Light verse can be poetry:

Venus, take my votive glass,
For I am not what I was,
What from this day I shall be,
Venus, let me never see!

Nonsensical or fantastical verse can be poetry:

Tee-hee! Tee-hee! O sweet delight!
He tickles this age that can
Call Tullia's ape a marmosite
And Leda's goose a swan.

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But it seems to me that comic verse, like "The Ingoldsby Legends" or "The Bab Ballads," or Don Marquis, Ogden Nash, Phyllis McGinley, or Dorothy Parker, is, like hymns or patriotic verse, verse with a "palpable design on us." Its virtues are not the ordinary virtues of poetry. A mere joke, like a mere surprise or a mere puzzle, loses its effect after one has once laughed, been shocked, or guessed the answer. Auden also puts in lots of poets, from Carl Sandburg to Edna St. Vincent Millay, who, just because they answered so well some special need of their own day, seem for the moment to answer no need of ours; they look wrong, without yet looking touching, like women's dresses in films of the 1930s. No doubt they should be in for the record, and in another ten or twenty years we may be able to look at them straight. Elsewhere, some of the choices from poets one is glad to see in are odd. No doubt, for instance, John Peale Bishop was something of a composite poet; his language is like a smooth but powerful cocktail, compounded of those contemporary influences that seemed to him to have most kick in them. Yet he did deserve to be represented, here, by something longer and more ambitious than "The Dim and Ptolemaic Man." Why not his rather terrifying "Ode"? Why, if Auden was printing Mr. Edmund Wilson's sensitively chatty "On Editing Scott Fitzgerald's Papers," did he not also print Bishop's full-mouthed and plangent elegy for Scott Fitzgerald? And, among younger poets, why Robert Horan's vivid but rather slight "Emblems of Evening" and not his sinisterly powerful "Suppose We Kill a King"?

Any anthology, of course, lays itself open to such snipings; every critic feels he could have done it better himself. But *The Criterion Book of Modern American Verse* is worth possessing, particularly for the sake of Auden's introduction. Auden is not, in any of the usual current senses, a critic, except sometimes when, as in his poems on the deaths of Yeats or Freud, he writes criticism in verse. One wouldn't go to him for a critical placing of a poet; in his very inept piece on Tennyson, for instance, where he accuses Tennyson of being stupid, he does not see that Tennyson's importance, like his own, lies in absorbing, using, and poetically responding to the centrally important ideas of his age. Moreover, Tennyson was more of an anticipator than Auden: "In Memoriam" preceded *The Origin of Species* by over a dozen years. Again, one wouldn't go to Auden for particularized appreciation or an examination of how a poem works. But what he is good at is a generalizing suggestiveness, a setting of poets against the "climate of ideas" of their place and time. He generalizes very helpfully in his introduction about what it is, for English readers, that makes American poetry different.

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Auden is right, I feel, in saying that an Englishman can nearly always spot an American poem because "the fingering is quite different." He quotes Frost:

But no, I was out for stars:
I would not come in.
I meant not even if asked:
And I hadn't been.

It is not only that "been" rhymes with "in"—not with "green"—as in Elizabethan English. It is not only the informal "hadn't." It is something in the way the thing moves, ruminatively yet taciturnly, easy-paced yet with an effect of dour strength in reserve; there is no exact equivalent even in the work of Frost's close English disciple, Edward Thomas. It comes down, I think, to rhythm and pitch and vowel colors in speech. English vowels, many of them like the long *o*'s and *a*'s drawled out into diphthongs, are extraordinarily various; there is a tendency in American speech for vowels to shorten and simplify toward the short *u* or the short *a*. American speech is, again, much slower and more even in pace than English speech; it does not hesitate and then hurry. It has a less various pitch, fewer personal tunes; it does not pounce at a higher pitch on key words, and then slither away from them down the scale, as cultivated English speech tends to do. At levels where one must be more subjective than that, one might say that American spoken speech is friendlier than English spoken speech but shyer of intimacy: more homely and familiar, but also less afraid of rhetoric. All these national differences come out, for English readers, in American poets of very different sorts. Let us take Frost, again, as an example, a very fine short poem included by Auden, "The Middleness of the Road":

The road at the top of the rise
Seems to come to an end
And take off into the skies.
So at the distant bend

It seems to go into a wood,
The place of standing still
As long the trees have stood.
But say what Fancy will,

The mineral drops that explode
To drive my ton of car
Are limited to the road.
They deal with near and far,

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But have almost nothing to do
With the absolute flight and rest
The universal blue
And local green suggest.

This is, of course, a metaphor about human life, about relative strivings and absolute values, about the human point of absolute values being to keep us plugging on cheerfully with our relative strivings. Homely, pedestrian—or should one say, of a country where nobody walks, and the car makes Frost's metaphor unstilted, automobilian?—and a little quaintly old-fashioned, as in the phrase "But say what Fancy will," the poem is also very ambitious in the almost frightening clarity and simplicity of its metaphysical statement. The statement, indeed, is *so* simple and clear that one wonders for a moment whether it is just a cracker motto, or something for the wayside pulpit, something that has strayed from *The Readers' Digest*. It is home-made wisdom, its roots in small-town shrewdness, not in creeds, systems, or books. All this is a purely American combination of qualities. Auden rightly points out that "being a poet" means in Europe being, or aiming at being, a somebody; even I, at my very minor level of achievement, have dined with princes and drunk my quota of champagne at embassies. The European poet—Yeats, in love with the "big houses" and always inventing imaginary pedigrees for himself, is a good example—thinks of himself as a kind of honorary, or adoptive, aristocrat. "In the States," Auden rightly says, "poets have never had or imagined they had such a status, and it is up to each individual poet to justify his existence by offering a unique product."

Thus there are no American Donnes, Ben Jonsons, or Spensers, with their "sons," "schools," or "families." There is very little in America of what Hopkins called Castalian or Parnassian poetry, the poet working with a certain confidence in a given tradition, on conventional themes, in a generally accepted manner, when inspiration is not working at full pressure. An English poem about which one feels a little doubtful (say, some poems by Robert Bridges or Laurence Binyon) is a sort of Royal Academy poem; an American poem about which one feels a little doubtful (say, some poems by William Carlos Williams) is more like a Grandma Moses poem. In the very best American poetry there remains a certain cranky, amateurish, hit-or-miss quality. This disconcerts English readers (they cannot take William Carlos Williams and in their hearts they are a little put out even by Miss Marianne Moore), but if, since about 1945, there has been a growing lack of sympathy between English and American readers of

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poetry, there are more complex reasons than this for it. The most notable tendency in recent English poetry by the younger people—in the so-called "New Movement" poets, Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, John Wain, and others—is a growing fear of raw feeling, of emotional self-exposure; it is not so much an anti-romantic tendency as a sense of the poet as an involved social animal, who has to think about his manners. This obsession with the idea of "tone" in Dr. Richards' sense has led to a period of accomplished low-pressure poetry, reticent, diffident, full of an irony directed against the poet's in any case perhaps not very uncontrollable emotions. Such poems are a set of gestures, protective, humorous, or apologetic, around a set of feelings never laid naked on the page. There is a self-consciousness even about the thought that one is doing something so out of the way as writing a poem, and the poet tries never to raise his voice. Now, one cannot imagine American poets at any time suffering from or exploiting such a set of inhibitions. The inhibitions arise partly from the fact that England is an overcrowded country, in which only a technique of polite withdrawal from the frictions of unnecessary contact assures any individual an area of privacy; they arise from all the muted tensions of the past fifteen years, tensions to which England, placed between so many worlds, is peculiarly sensitive. But they arise also from a peculiar split in the social consciousness of the English intellectual; nearly always moderately to the Left in politics, a man who votes for the Labour Party and reads *The New Statesman,* he at the same time is drawn by social attraction toward the orbit of "the ruling few." He is at once a bit of a do-gooder and a bit of a snob; and he uses tact, rather than brashness, as his way of getting noticed. All this constriction is reflected in contemporary English verse; American poets seem, by comparison, extraordinarily free in their emotional range, not only over the violent emotions, but often in their playfulness and tenderness. America is, as Auden says, not like England: it is larger, lonelier, a more mobile society, harsher than England but over a wide area warmer. The American is a migrant, loudly out for attention, and clamorous for fellowship. Thus, Nature, as Auden points out, is for the American poet not a Mother but something alien, and perhaps antagonistic. The company of Nature is not, for the American poet, any real substitute for the company of men (Wordsworth has no major American disciples). Auden might have added that for most American poets the company of God is not a substitute for the company of men either. The only great American religious poet is Eliot, and he found his roots in seventeenth-century England, not seventeenth-century New England: Auden, probably logically, leaves him out, as he leaves out himself.

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Marianne Moore is a poet who neatly illustrates many of Auden's generalizations. Nobody could be more of a virtuoso, yet all her poems, in that finicky Agag-walking syllabic meter of hers, do have, as wholes, their touchingly home-made air: like Victorian screens pasted over with colored cut-out scraps. Miss Moore's poetic objects have primarily a homely magic for her; gross communication is not her prime purpose. At a first reading, indeed, of *Like a Bulwark,* one turns helplessly to the notes: a magpie-nest of phrases from Goldsmith, eighteenth-century French songs, scraps from the sporting pages, pictures of shells and children's drawings of jockeys, resounding moral sentences both from learned books and from campaign speeches. What the devil does it all add up to? Does anything unify this bric-a-brac apart from its all, disparately, having caught Miss Moore's eye? Then one sees that it is an elegance in the shell, a tenderness in the child's drawing (a jockey pulling up his mount to avoid treading on a snail), an innocent fantasy in the Goldsmith phrase ("a blue fairy with a train eleven yards long, supported by porcupines") that have attracted her: this is a magpie with a sense of values. She likes the large, simple, noble statement, too ("poetry . . . must . . . take the risk of a decision"). And, as worked into the poem, the odd bits and pieces make in fact for Miss Moore's special kind of precision. The loved thing dies, but the work of art inspired by it lives forever; that, surely, is the oldest and tiredest of poetic commonplaces, but Miss Moore freshens it up as:

> *We don't like flowers that do*
> *not wilt; they must die, and nine*
> *she-camel-hairs aid memory.*

A living Persian miniaturist, Imami, uses, we learn from the notes, "nine hairs from a new born she camel and a pencil sharpened to a needle's point." Miss Moore uses similar tools to present her "real toads in imaginary gardens": a sycamore tree—

> *Against a gun-metal sky*
> *I saw an albino giraffe. Without*
> *leaves to modify,*
> *chamois-white as*
> *said, though partly pied near the base,*
> *it towered where a chain of*
> *stepping-stones lay in a stream nearby . . .*

What is such poetry "about," however? (A maxim for the young critic: never be afraid to ask the crude, obvious, and tactless question!) Has

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it a theme, a binding immanent significance? It has, I think. The theme, never made vulgarly explicit, is a set of persuasions toward an agonizingly alert exactness of response to the "minute particulars," the surprising details, of the world. This exactness, like an acid bath, dissolves away the stale encrustations of custom (Miss Moore, for instance, will make me *look at* a sycamore tree the next time I come across one). It enables the adult, in his confusingly multifarious world, to preserve or regain an innocent eye. It is an exactness that picks out examples of excellence; and attention to the excellence of parts of experience prevents one from brooding, unprofitably, on what might be the nature of experience as a whole. There is something religious in the attitude. Examples of excellence bear witness to something, and what seems not excellent, or capable of excellence, may be what has been mishandled or misapprehended by us. William James might have called all this a *mystique* of pluralism. That, anyway, is what I think Miss Moore's writing is "about": that is the "human interest" of her apparently brilliantly inhuman poetry. Bittiness and scattiness become the expression of an almost fanatic scrupulosity.

For the roots of that scrupulosity one could not do better, perhaps, than turn to John Berryman's ambitious attempt to bring alive again a fine woman poet of early New England, *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*. He brings out the strength, the stimulus, the uncongeniality of that harsh Puritan springtime, of which Mrs. Bradstreet was the fine flower. She might, he knows, have flowered more exuberantly in another setting. A note is significant: "Sylvester (the translator of Du Bartas) and Quarles, her favorite poets; unfortunately." He gets the strange unhomeliness of the scene for the woman and the deep jarringness of a jabbering, sermonizing, wrangling male religion:

> *Our chopping scores my ears,*
> *our costume bores my eyes,*
> *St George to the good sword, rise! chop-logic's rife*
>
> *& fever & Satan & Satan's ancient fere. . . .*
>
> *Forswearing it otherwise, they starch their minds.*
> *Folkmoots, & blether, blether.*

He displays, and makes actual to us, that sexual tenderness which in a Puritan woman is all the more touching because there is nothing in her background to give it any moral support:

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Now? That happy shape
my forehead had under my most long, rare,
ravendark, hidden, soft bodiless hair
you award me still.
You must not love me, but I do not bid you cease.

Mr. Berryman's earlier poems struck me as, on the whole, clever and polished but thin. *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* has strength and body to it; one waits eagerly to see what he will do next.

Peter Viereck strikes me as a smooth, empty poet, ridden, perhaps, in his verse as in his prose by the notion of a modish neo-conservatism: a lot of quite good poetic manners around no felt center, somebody trying to be Lord Chesterfield in Iowa. The poems in *Poets of Today* are the kind of thing that young men bring to me in London, outpourings with patches of talent here and there. Spencer Brown, for instance, aims at symphonic form in poetry and achieves self-indulgent wordiness. The introduction, which discusses the three young poets included in the volume as if they were Pound or Eliot, and doesn't even hint that they have still almost everything to learn about art, let alone "life," must be very bad and head-turning for them. Yet here and there, and particularly in some of Spencer Brown's shorter poems, there is promise.

Finally, I do not know what Roy Campbell's *Talking Bronco,* published in England ten years ago, is doing in this list; except that, as a British Dominions poet, he shares with American poets a carefree, adventurous attitude to language. The title poem is a piece of rough but vigorous Charles Churchillian satire on a composite English poet of the 1930s called MacSpaunday. A lot of the other poems come out of Campbell's gallant service in the Second World War; he was rightly proud of his rank as a sergeant, and even the birds tend to have chevrons. Campbell at his best is, in a way that recalls Victor Hugo and the great French Romantics rather than any English model, a splendid poet; he can use the most bold and obvious rhetorical directness, as he can use the coarsest colloquialisms, without ceasing to be a poet. There is no single poem in *Talking Bronco* as good as Campbell's earlier "Tristan da Cunha" or "Wild Horses on the Camargue," but even at his patchiest and cockiest he still makes a lot of his contemporaries look like wet hens. I hope that the book will not be treated snootily in the United States—as ten years ago some critics tended to treat it in England—because, as a Catholic traditionalist, Campbell fought along-

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side the Carlists in the Spanish Civil War. A good soldier, a warm-hearted and generous man, he is not really at all what we used to call in the 1930s "a bloody Fascist." Temperamentally, he is, rather, a patriarchal anarchist; happiest lording it benevolently in his family circle and among the large group of his friends. In practice, he cares passionately for individual freedom, and was, indeed, one of George Orwell's closest friends. His poetry, uneven though this particular volume is, ought not to fall a victim to extra-poetical animosities; readers who feel such animosities should remember that, though in defense of his religion Campbell did fight for General Franco, he was also the only notable British poet of his age-group to volunteer for, and to serve in the ranks during, the war against Hitler.

G. S. Fraser

THE UNDYING APOCALYPSE

ANGLO-SAXON ATTITUDES. By Angus Wilson. Viking. $4.50.
HOMECOMING. By C. P. Snow. Scribner's. $3.95.
THE FIELD OF VISION. By Wright Morris. Harcourt. $3.50.
THE LOST STEPS. By Alejo Carpentier. Knopf. $3.75.
GIOVANNI'S ROOM. By James Baldwin. Dial. $3.00.
SEIZE THE DAY. By Saul Bellow. Viking. $3.00.

Following so soon on Leslie Fiedler's brilliant Fiction Chronicle (PR, Summer 1956), I've tried to avoid the kind of novels he ridiculed so conclusively—the sentimental "realist" morality and the seedy sub-lyric celebration of illiteracy. Luckily I could do this without neglecting anything of major interest. The four real novelists in my collection—Wilson, Snow, Bellow, and Baldwin—challenge Fiedler on ground where he appears a little more shaky than in his admirable sensitivity to hokum. They make, in fact, an ominously neat contrast. One almost sees the novel walking out of its skin, the skeleton surviving in the English, the bloom, aura, *expression* in the Americans. Nor is this as much a matter of relative interest as might appear. The English are extremely good, and for old-fashioned "bourgeois" reasons: a well-turned skeleton is a beautiful thing. *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* owes much of its success to the energy of its plot, a truly misanthropic plot that puts all the characters automatically in the wrong and rings down as

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black a curtain as the gloomiest modern novel, but which is nevertheless only an elaborate novelistic device for saying that the famous English genius for compromise may also be a tragic weakness for evasion. Wilson seems to share Fiedler's view that horror and heartbreak are the norm of life these days; but the point I want to make is merely that the classical virtues of plot are as available and useful to this view as to any other. *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* has little moral surprise and no *peripeteia* to speak of. The only moral judgment of any weight is the plot itself. This can be regretted; one can sympathize with Kingsley Amis when he finds the hero too much fleshed out with cliché and his actions too much explained. Yet this is a real novel by grace of its author's humanity and wit. It boasts at least two very funny scenes, along with much substance and moral passion. The novel is learned, radical, deep-going farce and a literary geometry of virtues, vices, characters, and passions as satisfying as any genuine feat of the mind.

C. P. Snow is a far less expert plotter than Wilson. His book is really two novels rather flimsily joined. But the part that interested me—how a provincial bureaucrat fares at the hands of his hard-boiled London superiors—has a modicum of suspense. Snow still lives precariously in the world Valéry described "where seeming commands being and where being is held in a noble restraint which changes all of life into an opportunity to exercise presence of mind." True, the presence of mind of Snow's bureaucrats is seldom noble and Snow's own heart has mostly turned against them. But there *is* the subtle relish for appearances and their power to control events.

In Bellow and Baldwin, plot is negligible. In *Seize the Day* we *know* that lard and rye will fall; from the opening sentence we know that Wilhelm is doomed, his character consumed by his fate. Bellow, the most austere of minds, accepts and accepts and accepts, down to the smallest crack in the pavement. The things of the world are destiny, not decoration. Expression, revelation, wisdom—*play* is all. And the same should be equally true of *Giovanni's Room,* but isn't. Here what might have been a masterly novella of the modern Parisian underworld is almost lost in the special-pleading of a psychiatric case history.

"What escapes documentation," writes Fiedler, "and is available only to the imagination is what moves us these days in the mass horror that has succeeded politics and the private terror that threatens to supplant love. We have pretended too long that our experience corresponds really to the order of plot-logic or of formal analysis." Now I can't very well pretend that he means the same thing by "formal analysis" that I mean in praising Wilson and Snow. Still, when all

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allowances are made, what *does* he mean? If our experience conforms to any order, this order must be capable of formal analysis; and I suspect moreover that Fiedler's despair is so deep because his notions of both "plot" and "imagination" are so ideal, a matter, perhaps, of some high-bourgeois novel laid up in an Austenian heaven, with some magnificent inferno of a boneless glory raging beneath. How come, in this "post-political" age, we know so well what politics *was*? We speak of the profound political sanity of the nineteenth-century masters, yet in *War and Peace* Napoleon is a pompous little fool, in *The Red and the Black* he is a symbol of freedom and life. Politics and plot are analogous but not the same. So *Up the British!* and three cheers for formal analysis! A single Bellow does not make a summer.

Wilson and Snow may suffer as much from triteness and hyper-lucidity as the Americans from a certain slight willful unpleasantness. The Americans deliver a series of physical shocks only to dissolve them immediately in humor, discussion, and lyric atmosphere—a galvanic therapy that breeds its own indulgences and allowances. But they have a gaiety and *amor fati* the English too often lack. If we wonder whether Bellow and Baldwin can possibly live and think at that pitch—and the answer may well be yes—we also sometimes wonder why Wilson and Snow write at all, their expenditure of energy is so immense and their relation to their material so stand-offish. Yet in a gifted writer the extreme of any disposition is usually a strength.

A really great modern English comic writer would combine the upper-class brilliance of Waugh with the middle-class brilliance of Wilson. *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* falls short mainly, I'd say, from lack of social range. As intellectual comedy it is not quite happy enough with the academic world where ideas have their theater. Wilson is ravaged and haunted by all he knows of the horrors of spivdom and the sterile little modern married couples with their cats and their Italian food. He cannot quite reach D. H. Lawrence's superb classlessness of vision. As my readers must know by now, the novel's great incident, its intriguing, "advanced" discovery, in the days of Gilbert Murray, of a pagan phallic symbol in the tomb of a seventh-century bishop—this discovery so stimulating to liberals inside the Church and out—turns out to have been a hoax engineered by a particularly decadent partisan of *Blast*. The aging hero, a famous history don, knew this all along, more or less, but couldn't bring himself to expose it. He marries a fantastically awful sentimentalist, begets a sentimental liberal and a sentimental conservative son. As the members of his gruesome family show their British mettle and turn on each other in a paroxysm of

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loathing, the novel rocks to its close in an engulfing wash of sentimentality. Those Gilbert Murray liberal intellectuals, once gingerly defended in *Such Darling Dodos,* have a rough comeuppance.

C. P. Snow's *Homecoming* is the sixth in a long *Bildungsroman* by this gifted bureaucrat-novelist and self-made connoisseur of self-made men. Snow has little sympathy and not much understanding for intellectuals of the literary sort, but he is no fool. It's a relief, I think, to find an Englishman approaching Power as a theater for tragic action instead of sentimentalizing it into a romantic escapade. This is H. G. Wells's world grown ripe and professional. Instead of the manic-depressive exuberances of Wells we have something rather French in feel; a shrewd, unblinking, original, slightly but not annoyingly sentimental study of life in the upper echelons of the British civil service. Unfortunately for *Homecoming* (I didn't have time to read the others), he has added a sub-plot of sophisticated sexual intrigue. Snow takes after "sensuality" as solemnly as the editors of *The New Statesman* take after wine in their annual Wine Supplements. I can't now recall whether or not Lewis Eliot "gets" his sexually viable Margaret in the end. It is certain that she gives him a very good feeling and pays heavily in so doing. Lewis Eliot in love is a tinkerer, an anguished sheep-dog; Lewis in Whitehall is quite another story. In a recent *New Statesman* think-piece, Snow wrote engagingly of passing from a literary party to a party of scientists *within a single night*; the veritable leaven of the lump, the man so far inside he finds himself alone. This, perhaps, is creative innocence and the key to his strength.

Wright Morris, says John W. Aldridge, is "the most important novelist of the American middle generation" and *The Field of Vision* "brilliantly climaxes his most creative period. It is a work of permanent significance. . . ." Well, leave us face it, as the TV comics say. It just ain't so. Morris handles the romantic figures of tabloid legend and the mythical *Reader's Digest*-reading average man with a star-struck wonder that's just a wee bit hollow and fake. His real gift, on the basis of a chapter called "Scanlon," seems to be for action narrative and hallucinated horror. I don't say he cannot be amiable, nor that he doesn't deserve to make a comfortable living as a writer. But this particular "novel" (the only one of his I have read) is all signification and no significand. A group of middling folks watch a bull-fight in Mexico (you expected Spain?). Sometime in the past one of them, said to be as charming and as doomed as Orson Welles, has ripped a pocket off Ty Cobb's uniform, which talisman is meant to be a comic Golden Fleece (or something), and has kissed somebody's frigid, blue-eyed wife

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in a moment of sheer insight into her true character. This—plus some bull-ring monkeyshines and some Blood in the Afternoon—comprises the novel's whole action. So help me God! Oh yes—there's a funny foreign psychiatrist with (vast mine of symbolism) a transvestite in tow! The rest is mostly a busy, fussy tying-together of a lot of portentous details, in a short-winded Faulknerian rumination I found mildly amusing, though not exactly the glory of the middle generation.

Now for Señor Carpentier and *his* all too comprehensible despair. Imagine, if you can, a highly purposeful, erudite and *accurate* novel, as soaked in high culture as *The Outsider* but with every detail used for just what it is worth and no more, jog-trotting along from scene to scene and idea to idea, as colorful, new, and efficient as those factories said to be springing up everywhere in South America, a most *informative* entertainment—and all put to the service of a tired and jejune Lawrentian primitivism. *Lorenzo, what hast thou wrought?* But it is difficult to imagine how, given the appalling rag-bag of Carpentier's mind, he could have done much otherwise. The Apocalypse and the Atoning Woman are our most available myths; and Carpentier is too entranced by his fine collection of verbal exotica and literary set-pieces to care about attempting a serious novel. His best scenes have both pathos and humor. He has a first-rate mind. But what is one to

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say of the nightmarish little sex-box Mouche, or the wooden redemptress Rosario of the comforting pubic regions? There's a stagy sourness here, an impatience with the demands of his art. The book, however, is at least interesting and superbly translated by Harriet de Onís. It won France's *Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger.*

James Baldwin's second novel shows an increase in the powers he demonstrated in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and in his essays, *Notes of a Native Son*; notably his ability to work in a swift, dense, saturated medium like a Poe or a Maupassant. Baldwin leads us no further out of the pit than the others, but at least he holds his hell *in gran' dispitto,* molding it with great force and economy. I wish he had taken bigger artistic chances in *Giovanni's Room.* Moral chances he takes in abundance, but having done so falls prey to an itch for documentation that muffles his best effects. Baldwin's postwar Paris, though a mere handful of snapshots, is still the best we have had from an English-speaking writer, the least cliché-ridden. *Giovanni's Room* is certainly, bitterness, perversion and all, a compelling book, unmistakably alive. Details he handles frugally and extremely well. Perhaps it's too easy to ask the impossible, that he take his baleful material a little more for granted. I'm sorry he had to pay homage to Fitzgerald and introduce the girl Hella, a symbol that only Fitzgerald could have brought alive. "I can see her, very elegant, tense, and glittering, surrounded by the light which fills the salon of the ocean liner, drinking rather too fast, and laughing, and watching the men." Well, Hella doesn't amount to much. She exists mainly to be repudiated; the process is too long and banal, a stunt good but not good enough. So the book is at cross purposes with itself, distracted by the expectations that homosexuality is expected to arouse, too willing to throw the reader the sop of a tepid heterosexual tragedy.

With Bellow we return to the high, dazzling plateau of well-earned success, where misery, joy, and love join hands and dance like crazy. The title story of *Seize the Day* is one of the best things PR has had the luck to publish. What is one to say these days to anything so unlikely as a brilliantly original story? Bellow is as erudite as Wilson and Carpentier. His Wilhelm and Tamkin awake a dozen memories of pure-hearted literary fools and sinister, subversive Chillingworths. Somehow he has turned all this to advantage. The story is as wonderful a portrait of upper-Broadway New York as the first half of *Augie March* was of Chicago. Chicago was richer in physical contrasts—who since Joyce has rendered the physical city better than Bellow?—but New York is more coherent and invites a deeper thought. Whatever I find

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to say about this book will be sure to underestimate the good effects of Bellow's good-natured laissez-faire. Strange indeed to see it blooming so irresistibly at the outposts of despair and an austere scientific curiosity about the calamities of modern city life. So far Bellow is a little weak in plot and concentration; a little mellerdramer of the *Aspern Papers* variety might help later on. But the stories and the play in this book are the most thoroughly achieved of all the fictions I've been discussing.

So—peace to the restless spirit of Leslie Fiedler. The novel does seem to be dying, along with the literate world that begot it. But let us at least enjoy as many remnants of this world as we can.

R. W. Flint

CAPITALISM RE-EXAMINED

CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM. By John Strachey. Random House. $5.00.

Contemporary Capitalism, be it said right at the outset, is an admirably lucid, undogmatic and sprightly attempt to analyze the major socio-economic trends of our era in terms of a democratic socialist perspective. One was not entirely prepared for it. John Strachey has been best known in this country as the author of a number of embarassingly crude and doctrinaire books which attempted in the '30s to provide a Stalinoid theoretical foundation for the Popular Front enthusiasm of British and American intellectuals. *The Coming Struggle for Power,* the most widely read of these books, enjoyed such a success in this country that Random House even included it in its Modern Library Giants series, next to *War and Peace.* Reading it now one can understand George Orwell's fierce hatred of the whole school of "youthful snob-Bolsheviks" which centered around the Left Book Club and of whom Strachey, Victor Gollancz and Harold Laski were the main luminaries. From Strachey himself little had been heard since. He had broken with his Stalinist friends at the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact, had served in the R.A.F. and become an influential member of Britain's postwar Labour Governments; but he had written no major book to account for his changed views. Now that this book has appeared we are forced to revise our earlier estimate of its author. His is a subtle and flexible intelligence seriously grappling with central issues.

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Strachey writes in a tradition which academic economics has shunned for a long time. He writes about the *political* economy rather than in terms of those ever more refined, abstract and "pure" economic models which so engross the economists of our day. Instead of speculating how economic factors might operate within an institutional vacuum in which "all other elements remain equal," he is aware that these elements have the deplorable tendency of never doing this; therefore he finds it more profitable to analyze the dynamics of contemporary capitalism within a total institutional framework in which economic, political and social factors are intertwined.

The only book that comes to mind when one attempts to measure Strachey's contribution against others that have been made in the last two decades is Josef Schumpeter's by now almost classic *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy.* Indeed the two men, though deeply divergent in their values, ideas and backgrounds, have a great deal in common. Both exhibit the same tough-minded resolve to discover the main trends of the latest stage of capitalism, the same refusal to be satisfied with the desiccated models of pure economics, the same grasp of the central role of the institutional framework in which economic forces operate, even the same admiration for the work of Karl Marx. But while Schumpeter, the last great representative of classical liberal orthodoxy, described with resigned and melancholy regret the demise of a system which he loved and the emergence of a planned economy which was to him as inevitable as it was obnoxious, Strachey, while not believing in the *inevitability* of socialism, is convinced that it is ethically as well as politically desirable. His book is the first serious attempt to answer Schumpeter's magistral work on Schumpeter's own grounds.

It is a modest and a tentative book. While the Strachey of the '30s was among those who pronounced the verdicts of the *Weltgeist* with supreme confidence, the Strachey of the '50s writes in full awareness of the fact that the socialist tradition has been seriously weakened in the last few decades. It is now necessary, he feels, to undertake a labor of patient and tentative re-examination of the capitalist and post-capitalist world at a time when the older certainties are no longer available. While to many of his generation the rejection of a Marxism which they had never fully assimilated in the first place meant the acceptance of whatever antisocialist creed seemed currently most fashionable, Strachey is at pains to stress his continued indebtedness to the Marxian heritage, especially to the Marxian method of procedure, even when he discards a number of crucial Marxian findings.

Strachey begins with the familiar thesis that modern capitalism no longer resembles in any way the harmonious models of the classical

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economists. The economy now operates in a permanent state of imperfect competition between a few oligopolist firms in each industry. While disequilibrium seemed to the classical economists only a special case of equilibrium, it now turns out that equilibrium is in fact only a special case of a general state of disequilibrium. The only major nineteenth-century economist who resolutely departed from the equilibrium assumptions of the classical economists was, Strachey maintains, Karl Marx. That is why Marx's approach is still of enduring importance. Yet Marx did not expect that capitalism would destroy itself by its own instabilities. He believed that it would break down because it would force the masses into ever increasing misery, till it produced their revolt. Therefore Strachey centers his main argument around the well-known doctrine of Marx that capitalism necessarily involved in its operation a strong tendency to hold down in perpetuity to subsistence level the wage earners' standard of living and so to reserve the increasing surplus for the rich to spend or to accumulate.

It is Strachey's main contention that this tendency has in fact been checked, and that it has been checked by political rather than by economic forces. "What has really happened is . . . that wage earners, by political and trade unionist efforts, have forced up their

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standards of living in the teeth of the economic tendencies of the system." In other words, Marx's prediction as to the increasing pauperization of the working class turned out to be a "suicidal prediction": the self-conscious organization of the working class which in many respects was due to the labors of Marx and other socialist and trade union leaders so altered the political and economic situation within the capitalist nations that the original prediction failed to be borne out. One of the unanticipated consequences of Marx's work was the fact that the labor movement which he helped create exerted so heavy a pressure on the workings of the capitalist system, so drastically interfered with its earlier *modus operandi* that the share of the underlying population in the national income not only failed to drop but in fact slightly increased, so that their standard of living could rise with the rise in productivity.

In other words it is Strachey's contention, backed up by some ingenious statistical material, that capitalism has an innate tendency to extreme and growing inequality, as Marx claimed, but that the pressure of working class and social reform movements in the past century has in fact prevented the development of this tendency. In a curiously paradoxical way democratic anticapitalist movements can thus be said to have preserved capitalism. Had its inherent tendencies been left to work themselves out undisturbed, the revolutionary explosion that Marx foresaw would have occurred. There was nothing wrong then with Marx's economic insights, but his judgment of the political effect of mass democracy proved defective. He failed to appreciate the extent to which political organization can affect economic fact.

Up to now, Strachey believes, the democratic forces that helped modify the natural development of capitalism only succeeded in holding their own. Democratic pressure has raised the standard of living, but we now face a situation in which the trend toward the concentration of economic power is so far advanced that "economic power threatens to submerge political power unless political power can at the critical moment obtain control of economic power." A measure of diffusion of political power has been successfully achieved in the past, but in the contemporary oligopolist stage economic power has been so concentrated that it will of necessity reach out for political power also. Having lost whatever self-regulating characteristics it may have possessed, the economy now requires a central regulating authority.

But which interest or class is to do the regulating? Only if the democratic forces which have in the past succeeded in neutralizing the natural development of capitalism do in fact overreach their im-

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mediate purpose in the future, that is, if they succeed in finally transcending the system altogether, will it be possible to realize a society in which democratic diffusion of power throughout the community will not be crushed by economic concentration in the hands of the major oligopolies.

The above is a most schematic outline of the main thesis of the book. There are other chapters on Marx, on Lord Keynes, and on the process of capital accumulation in capitalist and noncapitalist countries which also reward close reading. Since the present volume is only the first of a projected series of studies it is perhaps too early to criticize the author for sins of omission. Yet one would have wished that he had shown more awareness of the dangers of bureaucratization and statism which, though linked to the oligopolist dominance that he describes, seem yet partly independent of it.

As to Strachey's main thesis, one feels that he sometimes pushes the argument a little too hard. May not, for example, the surplus colonial profits of nineteenth-century England and the lack of an industrial reserve army in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America also have contributed to the invalidation of the Marxian pauperization theory? Reading the book brings up many other reservations and

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queries but all of these finally appear unimportant in a total assessment: this is a genuinely significant work which attests that socialist theory retains vitality and capacity for development.

Lewis Coser

RING

RING LARDNER. By Donald Elder. Doubleday. $4.75.

Mr. Elder writes that Ring Lardner was an instance of "the popular writer who was a genius," and that in the early 1920s he was "famous and prosperous, an acknowledged genius; he had a large and attractive home and entertained a great deal; he played golf and bridge, he was sociable and amusing, and he belonged to a half a dozen clubs. He knew everyone worth knowing. . . ." We realize that a democratic dream has been fleshed. And to be a genius without being an artist! Yet at this point, at the very time he was so famous and so widely imitated, and Edmund Wilson was challenging him from the *Dial* to go on "to his *Huckleberry Finn,*" a change was taking place. F. Scott Fitzgerald spoke of this time in his obituary: "It was obvious that he felt his work to be directionless, merely 'copy' "—at forty he was "getting off." He remained the endearing friend, the proper and devoted father of many sons, the dutiful professional meeting deadlines, but hopelessness, disease, alcohol (by then he was a "two-bottle man"), and boredom had set in, smothering the fine but coy and secret artist within. But not before the fifteen or sixteen books, hundreds of comic and mimic pieces, and the short stories, which delighted such different readers as H. L. Mencken and Sir James Barrie, as well as "the millions," had been written.

Ring Lardner was born as long ago as 1885 in Niles, Michigan, into a large, interesting, and genteel family of established wealth, and he was always loyal to the values of that childhood. "It was the world outside that was to repel him." The umbrella of wealth blew away and instead of going to college at Ann Arbor he was enrolled in Armour Institute, which he soon left. He was then hired by a South Bend newspaper, began writing for a living and never stopped. Mr. Elder is understanding and conscientiously encyclopedic about all this background and he mentions no literary passions, such as a young writer usually has, no decisive shaking of the dust of home from his feet, no loss or gaining of

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faith, no revelations which ideas bring—even wrong ideas, no romantic yearnings. But Lardner was interested in sports. And Fitzgerald regretted that, "during those years when most men of promise achieve an adult education, if only in the school of war, Ring moved in the company of a few dozen illiterates playing a boy's game."

Yet it was this early immersion in the pre-World War I world of baseball, the training camps, bull-pens, press rooms, gambling houses, cheap hotels, that provided him with the materials for his work. Mr. Elder quotes from an interesting mixture of sense and nonsense of Virginia Woolf's. She is praising Lardner above Sinclair Lewis for getting at the essentially American: "It is no coincidence that the best of Lardner's stories are about games, for one may guess that Mr. Lardner's interest in games has solved one of the most difficult problems of the American writer; it has given a clue, a centre, a meeting place for the diverse activities of people whom a vast continent isolates, whom no tradition controls. Games give him what society gives his English brother." There is no doubt that baseball is profound; but of course there was a viable society in Niles, Michigan, and in Chicago, and Mr. Elder—from Niles—shows this. And it is this which makes up the "America" which Mrs. Woolf discerned in the baseball stories. It is not the humor which interests her, and certainly not baseball itself, since she is an Englishwoman, but the total vision, sparse as it is. And though it seems like a grotesque, Lardner joke to say so, the explanation probably lies in the fact that in the early, longer baseball things he did convey a larger picture through a device known these days—even in the minor leagues—as covert pastoral. In writing of his "bushers," his caddies, his boobies, and their odd removal from the workaday world, their complex slang and simple, passionate, narcissistic, and swinish lives, their defeats by love and by wise and good umpires and managers (and wives), he was perhaps trying to put down some desperate, Chicago version of the pastoral. It would explain some things about this provincial and conservative writer—why his satire was transmuted in some places and so harsh in others, why his jokes worked in some contexts and fell so flat in others. The fact is that he really cared for his goofs and boobs, as Elder points out, in defending him from Fadiman, who declared Lardner a "born hater." In the '30s his work was bound to be misunderstood. In any case, it seems to me that early work like *You Know Me Al* expresses Lardner more fully. One must hurry to add that it is not his picture of baseball life which one remembers with greatest pleasure, but hilarious passages of dialogue, such as in *Alibi Ike* and the short Nonsense Plays, and these can be found all through his work.

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The early end to his development is a central fact in his life but it would be disgraceful and disproportionate to attribute his relatively early death to any sort of vocational despair. There were many other things for the Victorian humorist from Niles to despair over. As writers come, he was exceptionally prosperous. His columns and the comic strip for which he wrote the text were widely syndicated. And he was happy in his friendships and family. Yet he did despair, but not in public, for he wore a "mask," which Mr. Elder has not been able to remove. Sherwood Anderson saw it come off at a party, when Lardner was caught in an uncharacteristic social embarrassment, but saw only a "giggling schoolboy." When one adds to the mask the long social silences, which became one of his characteristics, we see how remote a personality he was and that withholding the larger part of himself was one of the conditions of both his life and work.

He looked like "Ramses II with his wrappings off" (a sportswriter), "a wet owl" (Bud Fisher), and he had "a face like a cathedral" (F. Scott Fitzgerald). "Proud," "dignified," "modest," "prudish," "decent," "courageous," "loving," he seems to have managed the ethics of the situation all right. But there was another husbandry of soul involved in his work. He largely failed the claims of art, or art failed him, and where else could his help come from?

Robert Hivnor

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VARIETY

THE DEGRADATION OF ARISTOCRATIC DOGMA

The historian Denis Brogan recently referred to this interesting contemporary anachronism: a group of careless and emphatic young men who think that "Burke neat is a useful beverage for American daily refreshment." Our New Conservatives are the healers who prescribe the potion. But few people know just what Burke stood for. Since he hated abstractions, it may be of some interest to construct a hypothetical party platform for the New Conservatives, based on the concrete elements of Edmund Burke's social and political program.

Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* became the Bible of the post-1815 Continental and clerical reaction. Today his admirers find it and his other post-1789 works their main source of inspiration. Published in 1790, the *Reflections* were an immediate success. The author was at once estranged from his party and from his old political friends. Tories who had opposed him all of his life rallied to him, taking up, it has been said, "the finest weapon that had ever been put into the hands of a party of reaction and privilege."

Burke reprobated no form of government "merely on abstract principles," but believed that certain conditions were necessary for any stable system. In 1790 he wrote that France seemed to have strayed "from the high road of nature," because "the property of France does not govern it." One might rather have said that the Revolution took place because property had not governed France. The Revolution, as Burke well knew, saw the overturning of one kind of property by another. Landed aristocracy gave way to industrial feudalism. But when Burke spoke of property he meant land. He hated financiers, the rising capitalist class, the Jews. Landed property, he declared, was the "firm base of every stable government." Posing a practical political problem, he drew the logical inferences. He concluded that the very wealthy must be "out of all proportion, predominate in the representation."

A man with a thousand acres should not have ten times the political voice of a man with a hundred acres, but twenty or thirty times the authority of his poorer neighbor. Not because ability and property went together—the reverse was true. Ability, Burke wrote, "is a vigorous and active principle, and as property is sluggish, inert and timid, it can never be safe from the invasions of ability, unless it be, out of all proportion, predominate in the represen-

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tation." Here is a practical suggestion. Burke worked out a system that would protect property from ability. The New Conservatives, if running for office, might propose that "seventy-five per cent of our legislators be chosen from among the hundred wealthiest land owners in the states which they respectively represent."

Burke's second practical suggestion would be to exclude eighty-five per cent of all adult males from any active participation in politics. He computed that one out of seven might have sufficient independence, education, and leisure to vote intelligently. All salaried persons without independent incomes would be excluded. Not that Burke would have granted the vote to this minority as a "right." He only conceded that such extensive participation might fall within "natural limits," and thus be compatible with civilized government.

It is said that Burke did not think religion "a convenient myth to keep popular appetites within bounds." True, he thought it a "necessary" myth, and was specific in his proposals regarding church-state relations. He believed in a State Church; religion, being a fundamental interest of the whole society, should no more be trusted "to the unsteady and precarious contribution of individuals" than civil or military public service. It was the starving unemployed who would be thrown upon the mercy of such unsteady and precarious arrangements. Arguing for religion on grounds of public utility, Burke made religion subservient to the state. If, as he proposed,

> you will have religion publicly practiced and publicly taught, you must have the power to say what that religion will be . . . your determination may be unwise . . . but it cannot be unjust, hard or oppressive, or contrary to the liberty of any man, or in the least degree exceeding your province.

It could not be hard or oppressive because the truth or falseness of religious opinions was not important to Burke. If people believed in a God who sent them to an eternal Hell for disobeying "legitimate" authority they had "religion." Otherwise they were atheists, "who are never . . . never to be tolerated." Because every member of society was vitally concerned that all others believe in such a God, no rational property owner could quibble about supporting a state church which indoctrinated the people in this fundamentally necessary faith. The proposal is that we establish a church which makes divine retribution its fundamental tenet, and that we suppress as atheistic all religions which do not adhere to this belief.

Burke was defending the status quo. He feared that the French example would undermine the constitution he loved. Most disturbing of all were the so-called "rights of man." Just what did he

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mean to protest against? The document known as the *Rights of Man and the Citizen* was approved by the French National Assembly in August 1789. It began: "men are born and remain free and equal in rights. . . ." All citizens were declared to be equal in the eyes of the law, "equally eligible to all public dignities, and employments, according to their capacities, and without other distinction than that of their virtues and their talents." Thus careers were opened to talent. Men were declared to have the *right* to compete with one another in life upon the grounds of their natural abilities. But "natural rights" did not compose a universally agreed upon list. Robespierre proposed a more generously conceived declaration which guaranteed the right to work and the right to relief for those who lacked the necessities of life.

Answering such speculations with arguments partly medieval, partly Victorian, Burke wrote that we must be prepared

> . . . manfully to resist the very idea . . . that it is within the competence of government . . . to supply the poor those necessaries which it has pleased Divine Providence for a while to withhold from them . . . it is not in breaking the laws of commerce, which are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God, that we are to place our hope of softening the Divine displeasure to remove any calamity under which we suffer. . . .

Thus the next plank of our proposed platform might read: "This party, if elected, will never use tax money to alleviate the suffering of the people which may result from economic catastrophe, for to do so would be to interfere with the will of God."

The milder Declaration of 1789 was equally subversive. Surely the most disruptive of modern ideas has been the notion that all men should have an equal chance. Burke replied to this conceit with his accustomed vigor:

> . . . I may assume that the awful Author of our being is the Author of our place in the order of existence; and having disposed and marshalled us by a divine tactic . . . He has . . . virtually subjected us to act the part which belongs to the place assigned to us.

Difficult to write into a political platform, this might simply be made a part of what the State Church would teach as official truth. Burke added that menial occupations "cannot be a matter of honor to any person."

The relativist establishes right by the fact; the moralist judges the fact in terms of metaphysical absolutes. Burke charged the *philosophes* with treating doctrines of government as if they were merely abstract questions concerning metaphysical liberty. But even the effort of the moralist Rousseau was to contrive a system based upon observation—to build institutions upon the facts of human nature.

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Burke wrote: "This is the true touchstone of all theories which regard the affairs of men—does it suit his nature in general. . . ." Almost all of his theoretical opponents would have agreed with that. But he continued, "does it suit his nature as modified by his habits?" It is this half of the question which separates Burke from his opponents. Individuals optimistic about the nature of man insisted that once necessary institutions and environment had been created, so that man's natural reasonableness could find expression and be given authority, all would soon be well, or much better. This is not to say that they ignored habit, but that they wished to overcome it. Burke made his peace with habit, more and more he cherished it. In a more profound way than Pope, he concluded that "whatever is is right."

The science of government requires experience. More experience, Burke argued, than any person can gain in his own life. Thus infinite caution must be felt before the act of pulling down a system "which in any tolerable degree" has answered the common purposes of society. This explains something of Burke's defense of prescriptive rights. Practically it is this: In natural circumstances property directs government. Not only does the stability of society depend upon the stability of existing property arrangements—the status and distribution of property at any given time is the product of human experience and wisdom. Burke once referred to the "pliant accommodation of theology to power." His own vaunted "prejudice" serves to lull the poor into a passive, maybe even enthusiastic, accommodation to their misery. He praised the English people for cherishing old prejudices, boasting that "the longer they have lasted and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them." Because the stock in each man is small the English were afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own stock of reason. Individuals did better "to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages."

Not that Burke invented respect for the wisdom of the ages. What is that wisdom? Here's the rub! New Conservatives may consign the liberal to everlasting torment for fixing a humanistic goal for society, for making a commitment which is admittedly a matter of prejudice. But is Heaven reserved for those with a hearty ill-natured contempt for the human race? John Morley wrote that at every point in de Maistre "you meet with the preëmptorily declared volition of a divine being, or the ontological property of a natural object." You find the same thing in Burke. What does compose the "wisdom of the ages"? One has a great deal of choice. One may prefer the teachings of Christ to the

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practices of Torquemada, or see no incompatibility between them. The prejudices of Kant may seem preferable to those of a Nazi Storm Trooper, those of Einstein to those of Senator Eastland. Aristocratic taste is possible.

The New Conservatives declare that a just God rules the universe, and imply that those who do not agree with their politics deny this God. This is one thing. But they cannot avoid the confession that the course of history is determined "in ways inscrutable" by His Providence. Well, Providence is inscrutable or it is not. And if inscrutable we cannot infer a divine sanction for "prescriptive rights," political reaction, soil conservation, a class society, socialism, desegregation or white supremacy, or anything else. We have yet to hear the claim that Burke was divinely inspired.

There is one more plank in the platform. We cannot do without prejudices. As Burke pointed out, prejudice is of ready application in an emergency—"it previously engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue, and does not leave man hesitating in the moment of decision. . . ." This too had a practical application. In the last years of Burke's life law in France declared men equal. He warned that as a result "salutary domestic prejudice" would be undermined, and that it was but one step from this to "frightful corruption." By this he meant miscegenation, the races would mix, the low born and the high born. He wrote:

> The rulers of the National Assembly are in good hopes that the females of the first families . . . may become easy prey to dancing masters, fiddlers, pattern-drawers . . . and other active citizens of that description. . . . By a law they have made these people their equals. . . . I am certain that the writings of Rousseau lead directly to this kind of shameful evil.

The spokesmen for White Citizens' Councils probably do not read Burke, but here is their argument. On this score the New Conservatives could draw up a plank which would win the Dixiecrat vote.

I have not presented Burke in his entirety, nor have I done him justice. He was a complex and brilliant figure. But his savagery, his partisanship, his frantic anxiety, sometimes his ignorance, these too are important. And he summed up his own later work as well as can be done. Writing on French affairs at the end of his life he said:

> I have done with this subject, I believe, for ever. It has given me many anxious moments for the last two years. If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it. . . . Every fear, every hope, will forward it; and then they, who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.

Richard H. Powers

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POLISH WRITERS

The editors of PARTISAN REVIEW and a group of 34 of its contributors sent a cable of greetings to the Polish Writers' Union whose Congress was held recently in Warsaw. The text of the message read:

To the President of the Polish Writers' Union
Dear Mr. President:

On the occasion of the Congress of the Polish Writers' Association now convening in Warsaw, we, the editors and a group of contributors to PARTISAN REVIEW, send our greetings to Polish writers, intellectuals and students, who are playing a leading and audacious part in the struggle for national liberation from Stalinist terror and foreign domination. It is with the utmost sympathy that we have followed the movement toward democratization in your country, and we hope that the progress of this movement will soon enable your people to determine freely their form of government and social system.

We believe that literature, art, and creative thought can thrive best only under conditions of freedom of expression and cultural autonomy. Differences of opinion on the economic organization of society do not preclude a common stand on this issue among intellectuals the world over who prize liberty, for the tragic experience of our time has demonstrated that demoralization and self-betrayal result from the subjection of the mind to dogmas imposed by states and parties. We look forward to the restoration of personal and intellectual contact between the writers of your country and ours.

The cable of greetings was signed by William Phillips and Philip Rahv, as editors, and by Newton Arvin, William Barrett, Jacques Barzun, Saul Bellow, Eric Bentley, Harvey Breit, Richard Chase, Robert Gorham Davis, Allen Dowling, F. W. Dupee, Ralph Ellison, Leslie A. Fiedler, Clement Greenberg, Horace Gregory, Elizabeth Hardwick, Sidney Hook, Irving Howe, Alfred Kazin, Louis Kronenberger, Max Lerner, Robert Lowell, Mary McCarthy, Lenore Marshall, Marianne Moore, Reinhold Niebuhr, Meyer Schapiro, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Jean Stafford, James Johnson Sweeney, Mark Van Doren, Morton White, and William Carlos Williams.

On December 15, 1956, the following reply was received:

The newly elected board of the Polish Writers' Union cordially thanks you for your good wishes and kind words of appreciation on the occasion of our Congress. We look forward to establishing the closest possible contacts with American writers as with writers throughout the world.

The reply was signed by Antoni Slonimski, newly elected president of the Writers' Union. Slonimski, one of the foremost Polish poets, has never been a Party member, and lived in exile in London during the war and for some years after it.

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